

STRIKE A CHORD PROJECT: DOES INERTIA CHARACTERISE THE MUSIC INDUSTRY'S RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY?

By Hazel Watson in partnership with English Folk Expo • August 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Strike a Chord Project set out to investigate the impact of the organisations within the music industry leading the way in tackling the climate emergency. The aim was to discover whether musicians were aware of the work these groups – such as Julie’s Bicycle, Music Declares Emergency, and A Greener Festival – are doing, and whether artists are embedding any of the sustainability solutions into their own careers or practices. The research was carried out primarily through a survey and a set of interviews. The range of attitudes towards the survey, however, have generated an insight into some much broader and more interesting insights into the prevalent feelings within the music industry surrounding the climate emergency. As such, this report not only discusses practical action but also themes such as responsibility, inertia, systemic issues, cultural leadership, and the power of music to inspire change.

Part One of the report covers personal responsibility and the changes that individuals can make within their personal lives and musical careers to minimise their impact on the environment. The importance of personal responsibility is acknowledged, whilst emphasising the fact that often there is too much weight put on individual behaviour change in an attempt to shift the weight of responsibility from those who are really to blame; namely fossil fuel companies, corporations, and policy-makers. Many of the solutions that are discussed were suggested in the survey to get a sense of whether musicians see them as feasible within their capabilities. Particularly popular solutions tended to be ones that cost the musicians little to no money, including suggestions such as encouraging audience members to lift-share, ensuring sets finish in time for the last bus/tram/train home, adding a suggested donation to a climate charity at point of ticket purchase, and utilising a Green Rider such as the one created by Julie’s Bicycle.

Expectations of the industry are discussed next. Within the research there was an overwhelming sense of frustration amongst musicians stemming from the challenges caused by minimal streaming revenue making it difficult to have any sense of personal agency due to limited financial capacity. The report discusses the appetite amongst musicians to see more collaboration between various members of the industry to help investment in local economies and to reduce the need to transport

equipment throughout tours. Within the industry section, the report features a few representatives of various aspects of the industry: festivals, venues, recording studios, and logistics. The importance of a sense of united community is also emphasised, recognising the power of music to bring people together and the subsequent resilience generated by this cohesion.

Part Two is more reflective, delving into the power of music and the role of the artist. The Power of Music section covers themes such as the integral role music has so frequently played in movements for social change, the unifying strength of an anthem, the way that music can speak to everyone in completely different ways, the way it trains us to listen and empathise – skills we can take beyond music and into life – and how art more broadly is a way of co-existing with the non-human in an ecological way.

The 'Role of the Artist' section was defined by the responses of those musicians who answered the survey and recognised their own unique capabilities as artists. Their ideas were broadly divisible into five categories of influence: community and solidarity, messaging for social change, nature engagement, influence and education, and emotional processing. Community and solidarity re-emphasises the way that music has a remarkable ability to bring us together in groups and generate a sense of solidarity, whilst also having the potential to bind more interdisciplinary community work. 'Messages for social change' discusses the long tradition of musicians being at the centre of social commentary, the concept of 'backcasting' within public messaging, and the communally imaginative powers of art. There is a significant body of music that in some way touches on nature engagement and it is arguably a generalisation to suggest that all of this music is ecological. However, this section touches on the abilities of art to re-enchant the natural world, to bring us closer to more-than-human beings, and to highlight that which we are in danger of losing. Music can also be educational in many different forms, musicians have a platform from which to educate, raise awareness, and use their platforms to influence public values. This section also discusses the way in which significant musical events can have a lasting impact, not just culturally but also economically, politically, and socially. Finally, the importance of music as a solace and form of escapism or acceptance in the face of increasing eco-anxiety is highlighted.

The report concludes that music, musicians, and music industry have a unique role to play in the response to the climate emergency. That although we face many social, financial, political, and psychological barriers, the time for inertia has passed, and music - with its powers to unite people behind a cause, reveal truths we don't always see, and appeal to the hearts of people in a way that science alone often struggles to – has the potential to be a catalyst of change.

INTRODUCTION

Within the music industry, there has been a boom in recent years of organisations created to tackle issues related to the climate emergency. Many aim to assist musicians, venues, event planners, and industry representatives in forging a path within their areas of expertise to reconceptualise the way of doing things with an aim to reduce carbon emissions.

This project, commissioned by English Folk Expo, initially set out intending to get a sense of whether musicians are aware of these organisations, whether the work of these organisations is filtering through to members of the industry, and whether musicians are putting in place any of these – or their own - solutions. However, the processes of the project – a survey, a set of interviews, and a spot of reading – have generated further questions surrounding responsibility, inertia, systemic issues, cultural leadership, and the power of music to inspire change.

The subject of inertia was generated by the low response rate to the initial survey. Thousands of emails were sent out to musicians and industry representatives, and of the times those emails were opened, only 0.0029% of recipients clicked the link to the landing page giving information about the survey, and of those, only 0.13% proceeded to fill it out. This is in comparison with an email open rate of 35%. Is this indicative of inertia, or apathy even, towards the climate emergency? It is most likely indicative of apathy towards surveys. However, the vanishingly small number of respondents (40) does point to some bigger themes.

The climate emergency is undeniably such a huge existential threat that it is challenging for us, as individuals, to compute what role we can possibly play in the response to it. Engaging with the emergency can be emotionally exhausting, and it is not uncommon to feel frozen in inaction over an issue so complex and vast. Beyond this, many feel that the responsibility does not lie with individuals: in the UK we are currently facing a cost of living crisis, a recession, and the aftershocks of both Brexit and COVID-19, with many households dreading winter as soaring energy bills look to be forcing us to choose between heating and eating. For musicians, these issues are exacerbated given a business model which relies on economic stability for audiences to invest in tickets. Whilst such a huge proportion of the population is squeezed so tight, how can we begin to think about our responsibilities towards the climate emergency too? Surely those responsibilities lie with governments, corporations, and those with money and influence to throw around, rather than those of us struggling to make ends meet?

Within these contexts, inertia is completely understandable. It *should* be down to policy-makers to enact the changes we need to see, and no single individual should have to carry the weight of the climate emergency on their shoulders. However, those with the money and power to make monumental change are not acting fast enough, so it falls to us to lead the way in whatever ways we can. It must be emphasised that small actions are not insignificant; the response to the climate emergency must inherently be collective. It is of much higher importance that many of us do the best we can imperfectly than that a few of us enter into some non-existent ecological perfection. Though it may often feel impossible, the reality is that tackling the climate emergency effectively is still completely within our grasp if we embed a few changes into the way we live our lives.

Although inertia is understandable, it is no longer acceptable. If the response to the climate emergency has to be collective, then we all have our parts to play and it doesn't matter if that part is small, what matters is that you are a part of this movement. There *is* a shift.

This report covers a few methods of change-making in two parts: the first stems from the initial aims of the project and discusses what individuals can do on a practical level, seeking to set out how we make changes as individuals and as an industry; from simple and free swaps that the skintest, most time-poor musician can make, to the monumental system changes we need to see. The second part discusses how we can tap into the unique potential of the music industry to drive the significant change we need to see in government and industry.

PART ONE: PRACTICAL ACTION

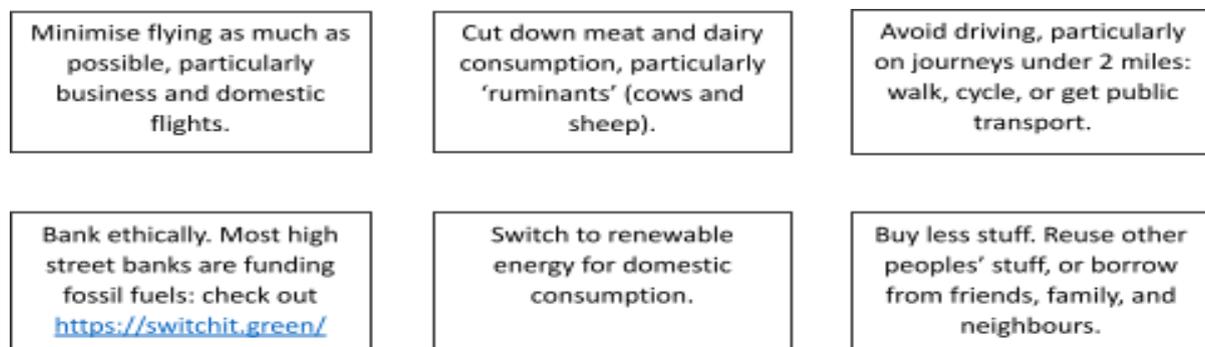
PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Historically within the climate conversation, a great deal of emphasis has been put on individual behaviour change. This is in part due to the neoliberal values entrenched in our culture that emphasise individualism above any form of collective identity and action, but it is also due to a PR ploy put forth by the fossil fuel industry (McFall-Johnson 2021). Both recycling and the concept of the

Carbon Footprint were promoted by corporations to shift the attention and responsibility away from their own actions and onto those of the individual.

This being said, there are individual actions that can make an impact, and it cannot be emphasised enough that every little thing helps. The climate emergency is sometimes characterised in a manner that suggests we either make it or we don't, whereas in reality there is a spectrum of success and how quickly we make the significant changes required dictates where we end up on that spectrum. Those familiar with the Paris Agreement target of '1.5 degrees', may know that there is a massive difference between 1.5° warming and 2°, and that every choice that every person makes can contribute one way or the other.

Most respondents to the project reported that they have made changes in their behaviour within their personal life to mitigate their effect on the climate. Out of an array of options mentioned, the most impactful solutions include:

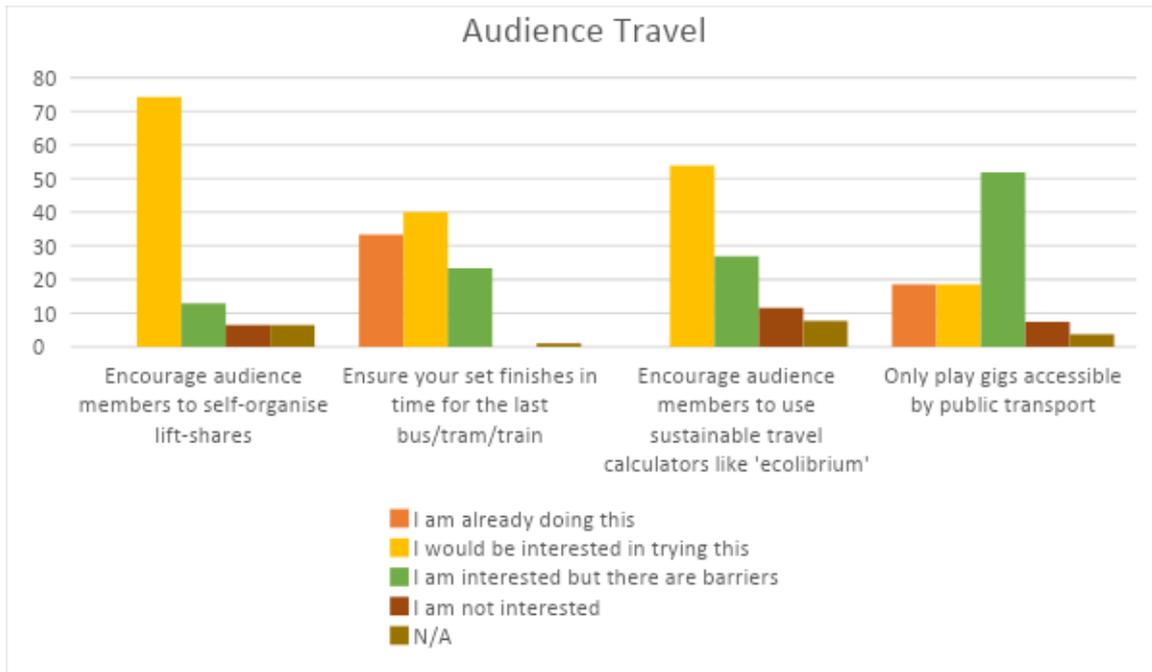


As with all behaviour change, there are both systemic issues and personal circumstances that can make some of these solutions challenging. Therefore, this is not a mandate that everyone has to do every single one of these things immediately; we don't all have to give up burgers and holidays. Rather, it is best to pick a few that are easiest to adapt your lifestyle to. The three easiest (and cheapest) are likely to be minimising flying, buying less stuff, and switching your bank to one that doesn't fund the fossil fuel industry (and other industries such as arms).

Beyond this, what can musicians do to signify that we, as an industry, are not frozen by inertia? There are four main areas covered here within which we can find some solutions: audience travel, money, musician travel, and merchandise.

AUDIENCE TRAVEL

Audience travel is the biggest carbon emitter in the music industry (Julie's Bicycle 2017), so is therefore the best place to make changes. Four potential solutions were presented in the survey, and the graph below demonstrates what respondents deemed to be the most appealing ideas.



ENCOURAGE AUDIENCE MEMBERS TO SELF-ORGANISE LIFT-SHARES

This solution would reduce carbon emissions by reducing the number of cars travelling to an event. A staggering 79% of respondents said they would be interested in trying it.

This idea was initially envisioned as being something artists – or promoters – can easily create on a Facebook event page, for example. This makes this solution particularly accessible to smaller artists relying on social media as a tool to advertise gigs, though it could also be embedded into the processes of those with more of a platform, for example a link with the ticket to a forum for discussing lift-sharing. There could also be potential to partner with an organisation like Liftshare.

Beyond the reduction in carbon emissions, this solution has co-benefits that enrich the fan community, creating both an online and physical space in which fans can interact and get excited for the gig.

This idea feels radical. As already mentioned, neoliberal values emphasise the changes *you* can make as an individual, whereas something like this is about collective action. Furthermore, this is a solution that is based on co-operation and trust rather than financial transactions: not everyone believes that we need to shift how our economy works to tackle the climate emergency, but if you do, this is a great solution that exemplifies the benefits of co-operation over capitalism. It does, however, rely on a significant amount of trust and raises questions around safeguarding.

ENSURE YOUR SET FINISHES IN TIME FOR THE LAST BUS/TRAM/TRAIN

This would mean that audience members can use public transport to get to and from the event without any risk that they will miss the last service home. This reduces car use and therefore carbon emissions.

This is a relatively easy solution to put in place and costs nothing (though may not always be entirely within an artist's control). Furthermore, depending on the type of gig, finishing a little earlier means that some audience members may be inclined to spend more time in the bar, generating further revenue for venues.

During interviews at Rochdale Folk Festival, one artist suggested a shift in the ways we do gigs, from almost exclusively evening events to daytime ones. This would be interesting to explore over weekends as it would likely encourage greater use of public transport since people are more inclined to get the bus in daylight than night. Co-benefits of this could include increased support for audience members who cannot attend evening gigs due to childcare or shift work responsibilities, and furthermore in some genres it could see an increase in attendance from younger generations.

ENCOURAGE AUDIENCE MEMBERS TO USE SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL CALCULATORS LIKE ECOLIBRIUM

Ecolibrium is a tool that allows the user to input the details of their trips to festivals and works out the carbon emissions generated by that journey. The user then has the opportunity to pay a small amount to 'balance' their emissions. Ecolibrium balances emissions through two programmes: Energy Revolution, which invests in community-led renewable energy projects, and Trees+ which invests in forest protection and ecosystem regeneration. The travel calculator can be found here: <https://ecolibrium.earth/travel-carbon-calculator/>

This was not a particularly popular suggestion, possibly due to it being viewed as somewhat 'preachy', or perhaps due to qualms over the validity of its abilities to 'balance' emissions. Furthermore, ecolibrium is only useable for festival travel, although individual artists have considerable influence over audience members even in these contexts so could suggest it as an option.

It is also possible to use it as an artist and balance your own emissions generated by festival travel.

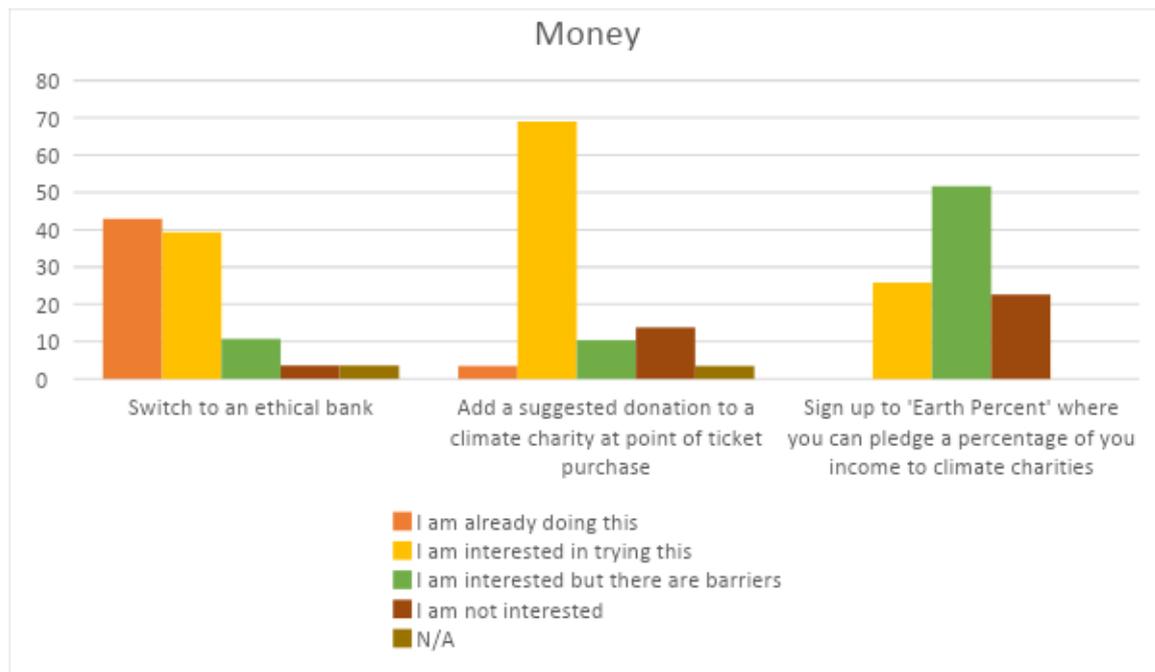
ONLY PLAY GIGS ACCESSIBLE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

This action would mean that all audience members are able to travel by public transport thereby reducing the number of cars travelling to an event, theoretically to zero.

The co-benefits of this action would mean that those events are accessible to audience members who don't own or use cars. Furthermore, it would assist a societal shift away from reliance on cars as the predominant, default mode of transport, which is necessary in the response to the climate crisis.

However, this solution had the least appeal to respondents, with 51.85% reporting they were interested but there are barriers. Here we encounter one of the most prevalent findings of this project: many musicians feel that the music industry is in such a dire financial state – largely due to streaming income issues – that they are having to take whatever gigs they are offered and are not in a position to be picky.

MONEY



SWITCH TO AN ETHICAL BANK

As briefly mentioned above, changing who you bank with can have a massive impact. As a reminder, the link is here: <https://switchit.green/>. This is a minimal effort switch that can make a disproportionately big difference, especially if you let the bank you are leaving know why it is that you are making the change. It is one of the things that we as citizens can do to actively divest money from the fossil fuel industry (and it is also possible to look into where the money in your pension is being invested whilst you are still working). Respondents seemed to recognise the ease of this switch, and consequently, this was the most popular action in the financial set of questions.

ADD A SUGGESTED DONATION TO A CLIMATE CHARITY OF YOUR CHOICE AT POINT OF AUDIENCE TICKET PURCHASE

This is not unprecedented; many of us will have seen this on various transaction sites. It is a tangible way of alerting your audience to the fact that this is a cause you care about in a manner that means you don't necessarily have to mention it on stage. Few people are coming to a gig to be preached at about the climate emergency but most people do care about it to some degree; by engaging them in your passion for it at the point of ticket purchase, it is a reminder that this is a high priority for you but it doesn't affect the atmosphere of the gig itself.

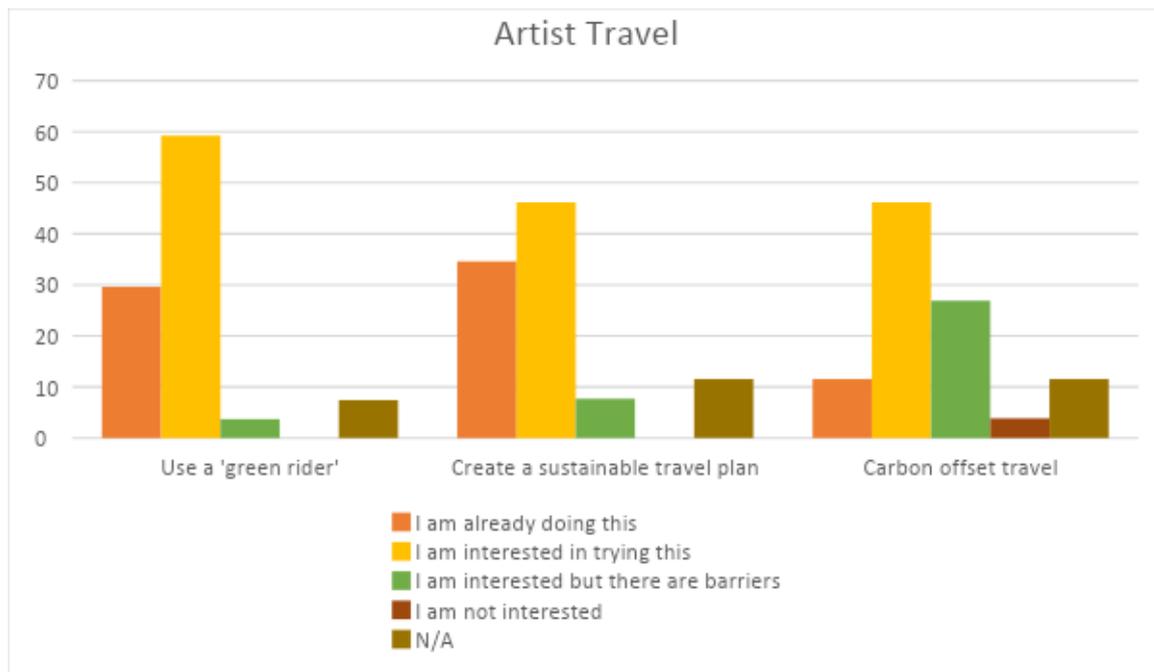
SIGN UP TO 'EARTH PERCENT' TO PLEDGE A PERCENTAGE OF YOUR INCOME TO CLIMATE CHARITIES

Earth Percent is Brian Eno's charity which facilitates musicians pledging a percentage of their musical earnings towards climate charities, a similar model to the '1% for the Planet' organisation aimed at businesses.

Although this is a nice idea for those who can afford it, most of our respondents said they were ‘interested but there were barriers’; presumably financial ones. Some respondents commented they were already giving donations to charities of their own choice and couldn’t afford to give more.

TRAVELLING

Music has long been associated with travel, from the medieval tradition of wandering minstrels to modern global tours. Touring has already taken a hit since Brexit, which has made touring in Europe more difficult and expensive due to the need for visas, and to take environmental concerns into consideration could add another layer of difficulty. However, here are a few potential solutions.



USE A ‘GREEN RIDER’ SUCH AS THE ONE CREATED BY JULIE’S BICYCLE.

This is an excellent resource for artists to help define how they can request more action on the climate emergency from venues. The link is here:

https://juliesbicycle.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2018JB_GreenRider_Music.pdf

It is a detailed and extensive resource and many of the ideas included in the survey were drawn from this Green Rider. It has certainly been interesting to see what musicians think is feasible for them to do; there are perhaps a handful of musicians with the influence, money, and power to leverage a lot of these requests. However, as a resource it is accessible to any artist using a rider and is best utilised thus:

Take a look through the suggestions made on the Rider, and work out which ones you would feel able to implement. Many of the ones in the ‘hospitality’ section in particular are very accessible, including requests such as reusable cups & plates, unpackaged fruit, and drinking water in jugs rather than single-use plastic water bottles. Even if you want to request only a few of these, this report would still strongly suggest using the Julie’s Bicycle template and in particular the introduction provided on the first page, rather than simply adding these requests into your usual rider. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, if venues start to get a lot ‘Green Riders’ from Julie’s Bicycle, however short, they will

become aware that musicians are a united community on this issue which carries more momentum to enact change. Secondly, if venues notice this demand for change but are unsure how to go about it, they can follow the link in the introduction and seek advice from Julie's Bicycle; so you, the musician, are paving the venue's path to change and are facilitating a much easier process for them.

There was a very positive result from survey respondents for this suggestion, perhaps because respondents could see how this could be adaptable to any level.

CREATE A SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL PLAN

Essentially, this is just about ensuring the tour takes the most sensible route possible, aiming for a straight line rather than zigzagging around the country. This would also save money, however, it is not often in the control of musicians themselves. Some respondents called for more joined-up thinking in the industry, so that venues, promoters, and representation can work together to ensure tours are following the most efficient routes feasible, though exactly what this would look like is uncertain.

CARBON OFFSET TRAVEL

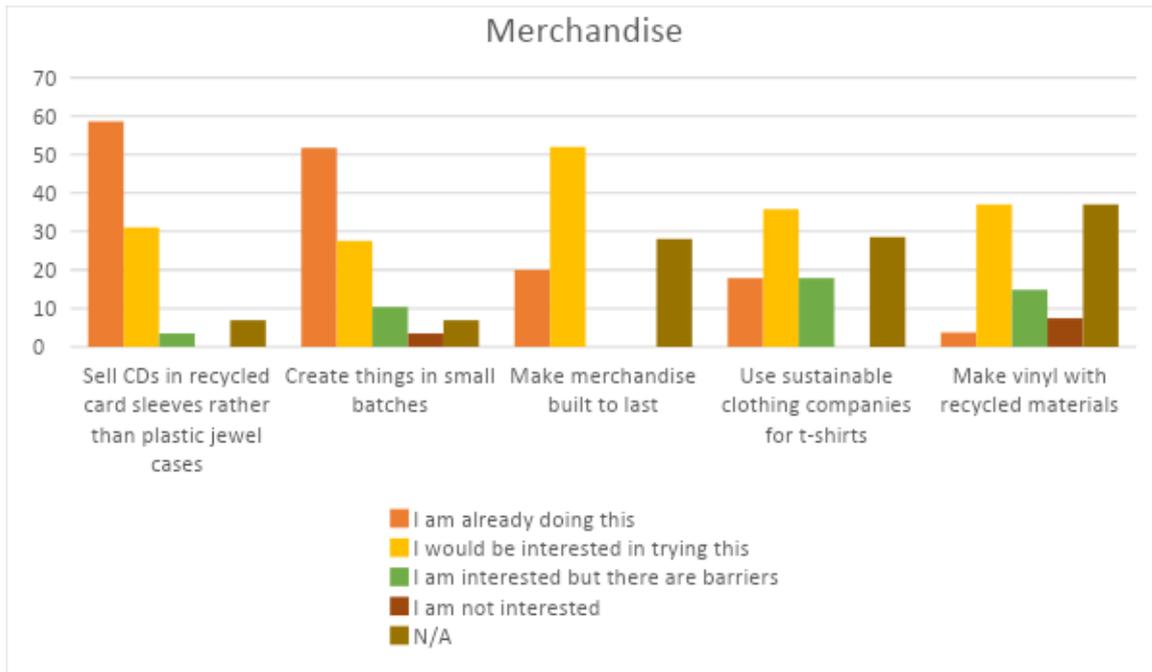
Carbon offsetting is the term for paying to have any carbon emitted 'balanced', usually through schemes such as tree-planting projects, since trees – amongst many other natural resources – are able to sequester carbon (storing it rather than it being in the atmosphere).

Carbon offsetting had been utilised by some respondents, but it is worth bearing in mind that it is much more effective to reduce emissions in the first place rather than emitting carbon and then paying for a tree to be planted. More information on this [here](#).

Once again, ecolibrium is a useful way to balance your emissions in a slightly different way to more conventional carbon offsetting schemes. However, it is only set up for festival travel.

MERCHANDISE

The best way to reduce the environmental impact of your merchandise is to not create any merchandise at all, which was a method employed by a few of the survey respondents. However, merchandise is undoubtedly a vital revenue stream for musicians that is difficult to neglect at a time where it is so difficult for musicians to make a living. And besides, fans *love* a t-shirt.



SELL CDs IN RECYCLED CARD SLEEVES RATHER THAN PLASTIC JEWEL CASES

This reduces emissions by 95%. It also looks nicer, is cheaper to produce, and you can fit more of them into your merchandise box than jewel cases.

CREATE THINGS IN SMALL BATCHES

Running small batches of merchandise helps to ensure that none goes to waste.

The only time this would be a real problem is on tours: if you have tour-specific t-shirts – or other products – you certainly don’t want to run out before the end of the tour, but you also don’t want to end up with a surplus that is unsellable post-tour due to the specificity. The best way around this is to make more general merchandise that can be sold at any time.

MAKE MERCHANDISE THAT IS BUILT TO LAST OR THAT HAS SOME CLEAR PURPOSE

Waste is one of the most frustrating aspects of the climate emergency. Using resources to make something that is likely to fall apart and end up in the bin within a few months is wilful misuse, so creating products that are good quality and capable of lasting a long time is important. Merchandise is one of the few areas within a musician’s remit where it is possible to make executive decisions and demand transparency within the process of creation, so it makes sense that we make the most of this.

Merchandise has the potential to be part of the solution to environmental issues too: one survey respondent suggested band-branded reusable beer mugs, for example, which would a) make artists more money and b) reduce use of single-use plastic cups at gigs.

Alternatively, merchandise can be a branded version of something an audience member might have wanted to purchase anyway. For example, Mr Jukes & Barney Artist have been known to sell their own branded hot sauce, whilst Richard Hawley teams up with Henderson’s Relish for some iconic merchandise that resolutely situates him in Sheffield.

USE SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING COMPANIES TO MAKE T-SHIRTS

Using companies such as TeeMill or No Encore Apparel means that the t-shirts you create have been made with the planet in mind along every step of the process.

It can sometimes be more expensive than other companies, which is understandably prohibitive, especially if you suspect your fans will not be able to stump the extra cost. However, there is a gradual shift in the valuing of clothes and fashion, and an increasing understanding that being able to buy a t-shirt for next to nothing means that someone or something, somewhere along the line, is being mistreated.

MAKE VINYL FROM RECYCLED MATERIALS

The PVC used to make vinyl has a detrimental environmental impact during the production of the record, leading to an increase in plastic pollution and resource diminishment, and is also problematic for human health (Evolution Music 2021).

Nick Mulvey released his record *'In the Anthropocene'* on vinyl made of recycled sea plastic taken from Cornish shores (Mait 2019), which not only reduces resource consumption but raises awareness of the problem of plastic pollution in the ocean.

One respondent to the survey also reported that Evolution Music have recently launched the first ever bioplastic vinyl (Evolution Music 2022).

This was an unpopular suggestion, however, possibly due to increased expense or the fact that a significant proportion of respondents are keen to dissuade audiences from expectations of vinyl records.

OTHER IDEAS FROM RESPONDENTS

Rider Provider: locally-sourced food from independent businesses	Hire a local crew to minimise the number of people travelling around the country	Raise awareness in community settings e.g. via choir workshops	Promote an active and inclusive local music community
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As previously stated, personal responsibility and individual behaviour change is important and does have an impact, sometimes even just in ripple effects that encourage others to make changes or demand action. However, a recent report from the International Energy Agency estimates that individual behavioural changes would only account for 4% of the necessary reductions to get us to net zero by 2050 (International Energy Agency 2021). This doesn't mean we ignore our personal responsibilities, but it does mean that over and above what we do in our personal lives, we have to demand action from governments, corporations, and industry.

So what do we want to see from our industry?

INDUSTRY

The idea of encouraging councils to partner with venues to provide free public transport to gigs had a really positive response within the survey. This idea is not unprecedented – it has already been done in Gateshead by the Sage, and is common practice in Germany for football matches – but these are both big companies/industries and have a lot of influence to wield. Some respondents questioned where the line is drawn; once you have free public transport for gigs, do you roll it out to sports, theatre, people just doing their shopping? At which point we get at what would be a monumentally useful shift in our economy: invest in public transport to make it an excellent service, then subsidise it so that it costs next to nothing to use. Furthermore, a scheme like this would be in the interest of local councils to arrange as not only does it bring pollution down in their area but it invests in the local arts scene, enriching not only the local economy but the wellbeing and life satisfaction of locals too.

Many respondents referenced the issue of finance; if streaming income issues were addressed so that musicians were being paid properly for their work, there would be more room for musicians to introduce changes into their own lives. This is a shift that has to be industry-led.

Others suggested the sharing of resources between venues, or ensuring that all venues have a basic in-house tech set up. These ideas seek to address the issue of most touring bands having to carry around a huge amount of equipment, which can often take up so much space that it necessitates an additional vehicle which contributes to a much higher carbon output, particularly on poorly routed tours.

Here are some other ideas put forwards by survey respondents:

Discounts on tickets to those who prove they have travelled sustainably	Partner with ethical banks: switch your bank and get a free ticket to a festival	Ban single-use plastic in the music industry	ACE, PRS, and PPL should provide green funding
Encourage use of music libraries for musicians who work with sheet music	Sustainability certifications for music equipment	More resources for online music concerts to minimise travel	Climate awards to raise awareness

So what are those within the music industry doing?

DAVID AGNEW – FESTIVALS & VENUES

David Agnew works for Just So, Timber, and Head for the Hills festivals, as well as The Met (a venue in Bury, Greater Manchester).

Six years ago, the Northern Festivals Network focused on the following elements: waste, fossil fuel consumption (mostly energy), and audience behaviour. In terms of audience behaviour, almost all festivals have begun to adopt policies surrounding audience travel, which makes up an overwhelming percentage of the emissions of an average festival (Julie's Bicycle 2017). This has included advocating

the use of public transport, ecolibrium, car shares, and walking schemes. Car shares in particular have been slow to take off. Walking schemes are a lovely idea, especially for festivals such as Timber that pride themselves on beautiful surroundings and nature immersion; it makes sense to incorporate this as part of the journey there. The barriers festivals face in terms of audience travel, however, is the vast amount of luggage your average festival requires. With all the necessary camping equipment, driving is certainly the most *convenient* option, and there have been few ideas to address this.

Festivals are becoming increasingly responsible with waste. Single use plastic is decreasing and there has been a significant rise in schemes like deposits for re-usable cups at bars within festivals, and encouragement of reusable water bottles.

Agnew also works for The Met, an independent venue in Bury. The Met are engaging with the problems we face and a refurbishment in 2016 was an opportunity to replace everything with sustainability in mind. Solar panels have been added to the roof in the last few months, and they take an active role in advocating to artists.

The most frustrating element within venue work is the waste inherent in the practice of riders: shopping is more wasteful when it's for someone else, as we tend to overcompensate if we're uncertain. Solutions here include artists using the Julie's Bicycle Green Rider (Julie's Bicycle 2018), or trying the aforementioned 'Rider Provider Challenge' suggested by one of the survey respondents – an excellent opportunity to support local independent businesses, reduce waste, and add a little interest to the monotony of touring.

JONNY WOODHEAD – STUDIOS

Jonny Woodhead runs Green Velvet Studios in Stockport, an independent recording studio set up after the pandemic. He provided his thoughts on whether sustainability is something he considered when starting out, and the barriers he faces in trying to make his work more sustainable.

'Sustainability in a studio environment is one of many factors that has to be addressed when setting up and operating a small business. Often sustainability decisions coincide with keeping running costs down, such as minimal heating when spaces aren't in use. I have also made a concerted effort to reuse any wood and materials when engaging in more building work in the studio.'

One of the main barriers I face is in regards to renting. Unfortunately, affordable spaces in Manchester aren't cheap and therefore when renting property, you are beholden to the Landlords inclination to properly maintain and insulate the space. In an old Cotton Mill this can lead to excessive heating in Winter, which is of course less environmentally conscious and expensive.' (Woodhead 2022)

PAUL BURGESS – PRACTICE & VALUES

Paul Burgess is a violinist with The Black Smock Band, but he mostly operates in the theatre world where he has co-founded Ecostage and contributed to 'The Green Theatre Book'. This came out of his work with the Society of British Theatre Designers, and was guided by a practitioner-led desire to see an improvement in sustainable performance in the industry. It was intriguing to get a sense from Burgess of where the theatre industry is with regard to sustainability, and in which areas it is ahead of the music industry.

Ecostage began with a pledge, underpinned by seven principles: Sustainability, Wellbeing, Interconnectedness, Creativity, Transformation, Inclusivity, and Regeneration, principles which are broken down into practicable actions on the Ecostage website. In the theatre industry there has been

a huge surge of interest in doing things more sustainably since the introduction of the Green Theatre Book –which Burgess has contributed to - around a year ago. It contains methodical, detailed step by step suggestions for creating practical changes within theatre practice, with varying levels depending on how ambitious your goals are. Already, The Green Theatre Book has had a significant impact on the theatre industry, involving renowned companies such as the National Theatre.

What is particularly admirable about Ecostage, however, is that they go beyond the basic practicalities and emphasise the values behind the change required to face the climate emergency too. This attitude encapsulates the cultural shift needed.

Although Ecostage has been set up by theatre practitioners, it is open to all practitioners of performing arts. Many of the suggested actions in the pledge are just as relevant to musicians as to theatre practitioners, and the values that underpin them are relevant to all. Ecostage also has a great resources section full of organisations working in this intersection between arts and sustainability.

In conclusion, there does seem to be a tangible shift within the industry towards awareness of the environmental issues inherent in the system. This is still nascent, but initiatives such as the Arts Council's 'Let's Create' programme have environmental responsibility embedded in their four principles of investment (Arts Council 2022), showing that this is something that those with investing power are beginning to take seriously. It is arguable, however, that some organisations are taking advantage of this, and are claiming to embed environmental responsibility when in fact they are not; a form of greenwashing validated by this Arts Council 'gold rush'. Even organisations who are speaking out about the climate emergency are occasionally not practicing what they preach in their own processes; for example, poorly routed tours and ineffective waste management strategies. This is frustrating as it contradicts the ideal of leading by example and undermines the integrity of these organisations in a way that has the potential to invalidate their messages. However, on the whole, it is heartening to see the huge numbers of organisations working at the intersection of arts and the climate emergency that have come about in recent years.

COMMUNITY

'If we act as individuals, it will be too little. If we wait for governments to act, it will be too late. If we act as communities, it may be just enough, just in time.' – Rob Hopkins (Hopkins 2019)

This is the value of the organisations we have seen cropping up: they are plentiful and brilliant and provide a nexus of action. A link to a full page of resources can be found [here](#). There are organisations such as Julie's Bicycle and A Greener Festival working on practical changes in the industry (venues, events, festivals etc.), organisations like as Music Declares Emergency working on direct action and lobbying, Making Tracks and the Dartington Trust are amongst those working in the area of environmental engagement through music, and organisations such as Ecostage are leading the way on promoting the values that could underpin the transformation that is necessary.

Beyond these organisations, there is huge potential for community within the music world in two significant ways. Firstly, as mentioned in reference to Julie's Bicycle Green Rider, there are benefits to presenting a united front of musicians geared towards specific goals. Secondly, there is something to be said for the community cohesion generated by music groups. Community action, and reliance on each other, can be of huge benefit to local resilience in the face of challenges.

BEYOND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

If personal responsibility can only go so far, how do we go about demanding change from those who have the power to wield it? And how do we inspire a shift in mind set and behaviour in the public at large to see that this is not only about responsibility, but about changing our whole way of life - and for the better? The second part of this report seeks to set out how music can play a role in this.

PART TWO: EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

THE POWER OF MUSIC

Music has been a critical aspect of social change over the years. 'We Shall Overcome' was pivotal in the Civil Rights movement, becoming a unifying anthem that brought protesters of all skin colours from all over the country together behind a vision of a better world (How to Save a Planet 2021). The climate movement still doesn't have an anthem, and perhaps this is unsurprising: to really rally behind an anthem, it ideally needs to convey an inspiring, positive vision. The message of 'We Shall Overcome' is so certain that a more positive future is just around the corner, a message of hope: if we just push a little harder, a change WILL come. So yes, we need an anthem. Or maybe many –songs to beat the drum and march to, but also songs to grieve with.

Because music provides a unique solution. Whilst conducting this project, it has been clear that people struggle to engage with a generalised discussion around sustainability and the climate emergency. In the face of something so broad, complex, and existential, it is difficult to conceptualise yourself in relationship to the issue. What does seem to help to engage people, however, is a one on one conversation. This is because in these scenarios, the exchange can rest on one person listening carefully to another in order to identify what it is that the speaker is passionate about and then can work out how to help individuals see why the climate emergency is relevant to them.

Meanwhile, musicians are in a unique position to engage people, and it doesn't have to mean beating them over the head with it. Music is unique in its storytelling abilities, the way it plays with meaning, symbolism and emotion, and the ways it brings people together.

These two things can be married together. Whilst monumental scientific statements or extensive reports (oops) are generalised and hard to relate to your own life, one of the best things about music is there's something for everyone. What resonates with one person won't with another, much like the way that often the only way to get through to people is to have individualised conversations. For some, something like 'The Seed' by AURORA might be the perfect rallying call to action, whilst for others, it might be Weyes Blood's whimsical '*if your friends or your family sadly don't stick around*' (Weyes Blood 2019) that gets through, or hearing Vaughn Williams' 'The Lark Ascending' and realising that this birdsong that was once so much a part of the fabric of the English landscape may soon be lost forever in so many parts of the country.

Music also trains us to listen, to *really* listen. As mentioned, the best way to speak to people about the climate emergency is to listen in a way that is genuinely about understanding another person's perspective rather than listening until it is our turn to speak. Most people do not respond well to people 'preaching' about the climate emergency, but people who take the time to listen and understand give themselves a platform to have more meaningful conversations. What's more, one of the powers of art more broadly is that it helps us to develop our empathetic and compassionate faculties by giving us insight into the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others. These are critical

faculties to be developing at a time of global crisis; it is more important than ever that we listen and respond to voices coming from places far away, and that we understand that even if we don't see the effects of climate change on our own doorstep right now there are people in other parts of the world already being profoundly affected by the changes happening. Social and economic justice is an integral part of our response to the climate emergency: climate breakdown will only exacerbate social issues and economic inequality. It will disproportionately affect the global south and those in poverty, it will result in millions of climate refugees, it will heavily impact food security. Art can help us to bridge this gap, to bring the distant closer to home, increase empathy towards those who are not directly in front of our eyes, and inspire action.

This applies too to using our heightened listening abilities to tap into our sonic environments. Whether that's the environments of our cities and registering that the birdsong has decreased in the last few decades, or whether that's a deep immersion in one of the country's remaining forests and listening to the wildness of the land. There is a phrase in the environmental sphere that suggests that

'you can't save what you don't love and you can't love what you don't know.'

In this context, 'deep listening' - a concept devised and promoted by musician and composer Pauline Oliveros (O'Brien 2016) - can help us to get to know the more-than-human lifeforms that we are surrounded by and rely on for our continued existence on this planet. The idea is that once you know them, you begin to love them, and once you love them, you can't help but want to save them.

Art can help us relate to these more-than-human lifeforms in other ways too. In the short book 'All Art is Ecological' by 'philosopher prophet of the Anthropocene' Timothy Morton, they suggest something we all know: art isn't decoration, it isn't passive. It *does* something to you. You can be charmed and enchanted, you can be thrown into a world previously unknown to you, created by your own mind and the effect the art is having on you: a 'mindmeld' as Morton calls it (Morton 2018). Morton argues that this phenomenon not only has the power to change you, but it is also a form of ecological existence.

'I am coexisting with at least one things that isn't me, and doesn't have to be conscious or alive, in a noncoercive way, in which the possibility of death is vivid yet diluted and suspended. We coexist; we are in solidarity.' (Morton 2018)

Morton argues that by coexisting in this way we are already being ecological; if we can co-exist with a work of art and acknowledge its effect on our being, we can do the same with other more-than-human things and prioritise their continued existence. Art and creativity is all about making connections where others don't see them, and revealing truths we don't always realise are there. This is exactly what the climate movement needs.

Music is something that predates humanity's agricultural civilisations. It predates all the flaws of civilisation that have got us to the state we are in now and goes back to a time we, as a species, were living in a respectful, reciprocal relationship with our surroundings. This is in no way an over-romanticisation of the pre-civilisational era, nor an argument that the only way to solve climate breakdown is to return to some hunter-gatherer existence. But there is something to be said for tapping into art and storytelling that was with us long before agriculture and capitalism, and speaks to the better angels of our nature; compassion, co-operation, love, respect, and appreciation for what we find around us.

THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST

Moving away from the nebulous philosophical ideas and towards more concrete things that musicians are capable of, the survey asked respondents to suggest the ways in which musicians have a role to play in the response to the climate emergency. There was an inspiring range of ideas from respondents, and most of them fall into these five categories:

1. Community & Solidarity
2. Messages for Social Change
3. Nature Engagement
4. Influence, Education & Awareness
5. Emotional Processing

COMMUNITY & SOLIDARITY

As previously mentioned, the cohesion generated by music groups can be the backbone of a community.

Music brings us together. Music can intensify an individual's sense of belonging to a group or community: it is little wonder that religious ceremony has so often included music and collective singing as such a crucial part of cohesion. Most of us will have been to gigs where the performer asks us to sing along with them and will have experienced the collective ecstasy that comes with the audience all singing together. This 'collective effervescence' has the power to unite people together in a shared purpose (Durkheim 1912): exactly what we need for the climate emergency.

Music can also provide the nexus of more interdisciplinary community work. During his 'Strike a Chord' interview at Rochdale Folk Festival, musician and composer Alistair Anderson discussed the What a Wonderful World Festival held at Alnwick Playhouse and created by himself and his wife Liz. The festival was partly centred around music and art, with the headline event on the Saturday night taking the form of a gig including music with an environmental theme. The festival also included education sessions led by experts and panels on the future of farming. These farming panels drew in local farmers to talk about the challenges they face within the response to the climate emergency and the way that they are often vilified as being part of the problem, with an aim to create a report. More than this, it was an event in which music and arts could bring people together from all areas of society to celebrate the world we live in and to discuss community awareness and action in a light of beauty and positivity.

Quite a few respondents reported their use of resources such as 'Choirs for Climate' to help them find songs about the climate emergency to sing with choirs and groups and build this sense of community around an issue that affects us all.

MESSAGES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

There is a long tradition, particularly in the folk and punk spheres, of music calling for social change. Musicians are often at the centre of social commentary, with figures like Pete Seeger's music and direct action leading to him being referred to as 'America's Tuning Fork', and Barack Obama's commendation of him for 'reminding us where we come from and showing us where we need to go' (McNamara 2019).

Respondents to the survey recognised this power of music and role of a musician, and many referenced various musicians with such themes to their music, sometimes including their own music. Alongside this report (on the resources page), comes a playlist of some of these suggestions, with

examples such as The 1975 working in collaboration with climate activist Greta Thunberg for their track *The 1975* which features Thunberg speaking one of her essays: a rousing call for action.

Within messaging, there is this concept called ‘backcasting’ which is a technique employed in which a desirable vision of the future is created, after which strategies are developed to lead to this future in positivity (Vergragt and Quist 2011). For example, this is what Martin Luther King was doing with his ‘*I have a dream*’ speech: laying out a vision of a positive future to strive towards. This is in stark contrast to the majority of the messaging around the climate emergency which tends to be doom-laden and apocalyptic in a way that causes debilitating eco-anxiety, especially when the realities of the science are coupled with reports of political inaction. Focusing on the potential positive future we are trying to work towards rather than the potential negative future we are trying to fight against is a more inspiring, galvanising, and certainly much more enjoyable way of framing the climate emergency: we can change the world, and we can do it through joy, love, music, dancing, and collaboration (as well as a hearty dose of well-proven scientific solutions).

Musicians and other creatives – more than anyone – are in the business of imagining different worlds, for communicating ideas, and envisioning things we can’t see before us.

NATURE ENGAGEMENT

Once again, ‘you can’t save what you don’t love, and you can’t love what you don’t know’.

There is a huge amount of music that engages with the natural environment to varying degrees. This is, of course, not in itself necessarily a climate action, but it can be something that helps us to relate to the more-than-human beings we are putting at risk through our economic practices, and to recognise that humanity’s existence is fragile and completely dependent on these ecosystems that we ourselves are putting at risk.

In a society that is quite heavily disconnected from the natural environment and the rhythms of the earth, music and art can be a way in which we re-enchant the natural world and make it accessible through songs, stories, and paintings in a way that it isn’t always accessible in reality. This can be due to social and financial constraints such as the lack of public access to the land we live on in England, or people not having the resources to get out of inner city suburbs and into swathes of nature.

For example, the Spell Songs are a group that had their genesis in the book by artist Jackie Morris and writer Robert MacFarlane that highlights the words being taken out of the children’s English dictionary. They focus on nature words like ‘acorn’ and ‘hare’ as these are now so out of children’s vernacular that they’re simply not included anymore. Spell Songs has made these poems into songs, and during the live performances, Jackie Morris paints what they sing about; perfectly demonstrating the idea that you can sing these things back into being, back into public consciousness, and by weaving Morris’ beautiful work into the music - and making it inter-disciplinary – re-enchant these natural phenomena to the audience.

This type of music often also highlights what we stand to lose. This is the thesis behind Alistair and Liz Anderson’s *What a Wonderful World Trust*: that by focusing on that which is precious and precarious in the world, music can inspire action to save it. Folk musician Rowan Piggott began the Songhive Project based on this idea:

‘SONGHIVE is a folksong project concerned with raising awareness of the current plight of our native bees. Bees are

Folk music has long been fraught with political dissent and attended by social change; perhaps this collection will serve

responsible for 80% of pollination in the UK, are essential to biodiversity, and ultimately the future of humanity. Despite all this, we continue to obliterate the pollen-rich plants they depend on, and our governments insist on legalising pesticides that do them harm.

to highlight how the decline of bees has entered the public consciousness. Here isn't the place to wax lyrical, but hopefully this small project can raise some money for our friends; "the little musicians of the world". (Rowan Piggot)

The final product of this project was the Songhive album; a compilation of British folksongs about bees, contributed to by many notable folk musicians.

On the subject of folksong, much folk music also reacquaints us with our own heritage, reminding us of the customs of our country from a time we were more attuned to the rhythms of nature as rural agricultural lifestyles encouraged a much closer, more reciprocal relationship with our environment.

INFLUENCE, EDUCATION & AWARENESS

This can come in many forms. Some respondents acknowledged that songs themselves can be educational in quite a literal way by imparting information or telling stories through lyrics. Musicians with a significant platform can use their considerable influence to raise awareness of an issue, such as Coldplay using their Music of the Spheres tour to generate conversations around sustainability in the music industry. Music also has a unique ability to touch parts of our psyche in ways other formats of information transmission cannot, putting things in a new light and going straight to our emotional core to make a message resonate in a much more effective way than a scientific report might. Themes that come up in music are often cultural memes, and issues like the climate emergency finding their way into music can increase awareness by normalising having these conversations.

Events can also go a long way towards increasing awareness. Historical examples like Live Aid demonstrate that events can resonate with the cultural consciousness, raise awareness, and indeed raise a lot of money for a cause. The Big Climate Thing in New York City is in a similar sort of vein, taking place the 16th-18th September 2022 and raising money for Earth Percent, Brian Eno's climate charity. Australia held an Environmental Music Prize competition this year, with applicants competing for a prize of \$20,000AUD and therefore unsurprisingly garnering significant attention. It would be exciting to see more innovative and imaginative climate events cropping up in the UK. Honourable mentions go to the What a Wonderful World Festival, the POP26 event at FutureYard, the Tune into Nature Prize, and Homestage's pFITE.

Some musicians are doing very creative work with education and awareness. Cosmo Sheldrake's *Wake Up Calls* album is comprised of recordings of the songs of endangered birds, not only teaching us the birdsongs of our land but raising awareness of the plight of these citizens of our country. Sam Lee hosts the Nest Collective's events 'Singing with Nightingales', a fully immersive evening in which audience members huddle around a campfire in the woods listening to stories and songs about the nightingale – one of Sheldrake's endangered birds, and a bird that is ingrained in our cultural identity – before leading a night walk deeper into the woods to listen to the masterful song of the nightingale as the musicians duet with it. In amongst the songs and stories, Lee not only teaches the audience about birds, habitats, and heritage, but gives actionable practical advice to attendees. The level of immersion makes this form of education go far beyond information and into the realm of deep feeling and one leaves with a sense that the nightingale's song has been sung into your blood.

EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

Finally, music is our solace.

The survey inquired about emotional responses to the climate emergency, and the most common words used by respondents were ‘terrified’, ‘worried’, and ‘powerless’. A few answers stood out.

‘I often try not to think about it because it is overwhelming.’

‘Swinging between depression and hopelessness.’

‘Extremely concerned for the future, in particular for my children.’

‘Fear that many beautiful and fascinating things about the planet will either not be there or there will not be space to honour them.’

Unsurprisingly, fairly negative. ‘Eco-anxiety’ is affecting more and more of our population, particularly younger generations who are becoming increasingly aware that the future their lives hold may be very different from the lives of their parents and feel betrayed by those in power who seem to do nothing to avert this. This eco-anxiety often feels extremely lonely.

But there are songs that find themselves bringing comfort to those who suffer and worry for the future. Songs provide us with a sense that other people are feeling the same way, convince us that there is hope, show us that there *is* action, or simply give us a place to sit with our feelings, grieve, and admit that this is, undoubtedly, ‘*a wild time to be alive*’ (Weyes Blood 2019).

CONCLUSION

The beginnings of this project had an underwhelming response. Through the partnership with English Folk Expo, the survey was sent out to their mailing list of more than 3,000 artists and music industry representatives. The routes used to promote the invitation to this survey were the same routes that the EFX team use to promote their open calls, artist opportunities, and international networks. This survey received significantly less engagement than any other programme or project promoted by English Folk Expo through this same route of mailing list, social media coverage, and even on this occasion a dedicated live webinar which was subsequently presented on their Folk Talk Academy platform. Evidently, something about this survey did not chime with these contacts in the same way as all of their other work, and received much less attention than we had hoped.

But does inertia characterise the music industry’s response to the climate emergency? The project hasn’t yet found any studios or record labels that are focusing on environmental responsibility, and some organisations that claim to have sustainability front and centre of what they are doing aren’t practising what they preach. It seems that many musicians and industry members struggle to see their place in all this, and this is understandable; it is challenging to look beyond the immediate economic and social difficulties we face and confront the realities of the much bigger issue that threatens our existence, and even more challenging to work out how best to use our energy to respond to that threat in a way that still allows us to enjoy living our lives to the full.

However, there does seem to be a shift in the music industry, with a heartening number of organisations and individuals recognising the scale of the emergency and taking up the mantle. Hopefully some of the ideas laid out in this report help to identify what seems feasible and actionable, and provide a thinking point for what individuals are capable of. The overarching message is this: that this is something that needs us all. We are all going to be impacted by climate

breakdown, and we all have a responsibility to do as much as we are capable of to avert it by embedding as much sustainable practice as we can into our lives.

This doesn't have to feel like an obligation; it's an opportunity. An opportunity to, in the face of destruction, rise up and co-create the world we want to see. We need music now more than ever in order to build a world based on resilience, diversity, justice, compassion, and cooperation in a way that honours our shared cultural heritage. This is a task that requires an inter-disciplinary, multi-faceted form of co-creation: we need scientists, policymakers, educators, economists, designers, architects, academics, writers, and spiritual leaders, and we need music to bind us all together.

To borrow some words spoken in the Lost Gardens of Heligan, what we, as musicians, should be striving for is:

'to honour the past, enrich the present, and pave the way to the future.' (Van de Velde 2022)

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RESOURCES

Big Climate Thing: <https://thebigclimatething.com/>

Ecolibrium: <https://ecolibrium.earth/travel-carbon-calculator/>

Choirs for Climate: <https://choirsforclimate.com/>

Earth Percent: <https://earthpercent.org/>

Environmental Music Prize: <https://environmentalmusicprize.com/>

Liftshare: <https://liftshare.com/uk>

No Encore Apparel: <https://noencoreapparel.com/>

Spell Songs: <https://www.thelostwords.org/spell-songs/>

Switch It: <https://switchit.green/>

TeeMill: <https://teemill.com/>

Theatre Green Book: <https://theatregreenbook.com/>