

Topic: Starting a sustainability group/initiatives at your workplace

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Panellists:

- Joyce Lee - President of IndigoJLD and Chair of the American Alliance of Museums Environment and Climate Network
- Sara Kassam - Sustainability Lead at Victoria & Albert Museum
- Caitlin Southwick, - Founder and Executive Director of Ki Culture and Sustainability in Conservation
- Jenny White - Chief Executive, Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation

Host:

- Morgan Lirette - Book and Paper Conservator and founder/current co-chair of the staff-led BL Green Network, British Library

Guest speaker:

- Paul Garsiden - Conservation Scientist, British Library

Summary of Q&A below. All identifying information regarding audience members has been removed.

Q1: How many museums have a sustainability network? Has this been surveyed?

SK: Not sure. However, the [National Museum Directors' Council](#) will be publishing a report this summer (in time for Cop26) looking at museums' climate action, which should include things like that. Reference cited: [Fit for the Future](#)

JL: Something the [American Alliance of Museums Environment and Climate Network](#) are looking into, as well. We know sustainability will only succeed if we have both the leadership support and ground up support. This must also be 'horizontal support', i.e. interdisciplinary and a part of the shared values of the museum. Check out the [AAM's Environment and Climate virtual coffee hour](#) (/cocktail hour in the UK!).

JW: We're talking about 2 things: a structure to measure the carbon impact of a museum and grassroots enthusiasm. The way to affect change is to galvanise 'green champions' and start a network of like-minded people (more impact in groups), but also when it comes to big institutions like museums they do have a funding criteria (particularly if it's a public museum). The Arts Council England ask to see environmental policies, for example. Private donors are also looking for Environmental and Social Governance reasons for funding. So there is a system internally, and externally with things like the [Culture Declares](#) group. They have a list of organisations that have identified as a member or that they have a group themselves.

CS: Unfortunately there's no information on how many or which museums have a 'green network' - but this would be helpful! Not only for our own knowledge, but museum boards do also respond to 'peer pressure' or a sense of needed to do what everyone else is doing. Another problem people who start these networks don't know where to go once they've started so it's important that that 'top down' support is there for the grassroots networks. This is what Ki Culture's [Ki Futures](#) programme is looking to

do - to guide these internal teams to make their institution more sustainable with resources and help and connect those green teams around the world.

ML: Could Icon ESN make a survey asking this question?

Q2: My institution doesn't have a sustainability network yet, although it is getting a new sustainability manager. Can you give some tips on how to start one?

JL: When you start a 'green' team - don't leave your facilities manager out! From the data in the states, the carbon footprint of museum *buildings* is 60-75% of their entire carbon footprint. This invisible footprint of a quiet building running 24/7, particularly for buildings where their local fuel source is quite 'dirty' meaning coal and natural gas compared to clean energy.

SK: Fit for the Future is a good UK network to plug into. There are talks to get a Sustainability Coordinators network. Set a terms of reference, harnessing the enthusiasm and focusing on what you can actually do. Have that ToR approved by HR and chiefs, which then gives you the time to spend on it, i.e. 1 meeting a quarter, training sessions on offer, key responsibilities that network members will have. Show how this network will contribute to the Strategic goals of the organisation, which gets senior buy-in. Even if this starts spontaneously, focus on what you want to achieve and how. And action plans! V&A has around 45 coordinators, 2/3rd are super active and they've gone back to their teams with an action plan template - here's what we'll focus on, here are the resources we need. There's so much you could do, but focusing on your influence and impact will really help. Groups/departments can share their plans and compare and collaborate. Being defined helps, gives you kudos and weight. You should get permission from your sr mgmt to work on this, this shouldn't just be in your spare time.

ML: Can we create a network of networks in the Icon realm?

CS: It starts with one person, so don't wait around. Start finding your allies, chatting about it with your colleagues. Then identify the right partners and who is going to have the authority to enact change. See the [Energy Ki Book](#) to see who you should be chatting to to implement more sustainable energy protocols and procedures in your org, ie. facilities manager, CFO, IT director, etc. Be aware of who's who in your org and making the connections.

JW: Putting British Council hat on - as a global organisation it was a challenge to get a network started. Communication is really important, to make people feel like they are in a group. We started a Green Coffee Morning, then once people came into the room we set out a 10-point manifesto. Action plans are important. Also, to validate your network in your comms, i.e. once a group was established actions could start with "on behalf of the green arts group". Make it a community. Never let on that it's anything less than a group, even if it's just you showing up to the meetings. Senior management start to notice when it's a group. Convert that group into change, you have agency in numbers. Senior management isn't interested in just being green, so pull in social policies and make it intersectional.

Audience tip: make sure all departments are represented in some way, and executive buy-in is important!

Q3: Any tips on how to influence up the management chain? I.e. to get upper management to move sustainability commitments into actions?

CS: Four major things when you're trying to talk to upper management: 1. Your initiative is aligned with their initiatives, align it with museum values and direction. 2. Demonstrate impact, numbers are helpful. 3. Mention what other institutions are doing, peer pressure. And 4. Money talks!

JL: Energy savings! And keep it up even if you don't have power... The network in AAM is small, just 1 in 20 networks in AAM, but they got the AAM to sign the Climate Heritage Network MOU to sign. For years AAM didn't sign it, but the lil Environmental and Climate Network got the big organisation to sign it leading up to Cop26 so be persistent! Don't give up!

See: [ENERGY STAR Score for Museums: You can manage what you measure](#) by Joyce Lee

JW: What gets measured gets managed! Example - the British Council, without spending any extra money, they turned the AC off in the office just 20 mins earlier than normal each evening. Measured the electricity, the tariffs of the electricity, and it was thousands of savings without anyone even noticing. This mulches the ground for the more speculative and conceptual approaches.

SK: Persistence! Don't get disheartened. Also be ready for when you get your moment, always have your plans, ideas and suggestions ready for when you get the right budget/decision maker/policy change. Stars do align. Find allies! If you're trying to influence senior management, you can have allies amongst your peers, your more direct management but also don't overlook trustees and audiences. Make it hard to say no by building that alliance. Make it easy and desirable to make sustainable change. The time is short, things are becoming more urgent.

JW: Chief operating officer at British Council had made a personal 'no fly month', so they knocked on his door and invited him to speak to the Greening the Arts Group. Recognise that people are motivated by different things - and motivations like being afraid of getting fined is a big one. Money savings is also a big one. And reputation! Look around for tools that will help you make the case, ex. [ISO 14001](#) Standard for excellence in environmental management. Helped to make a environmental policy (see on website). When you're making partnerships swap policies and see if it's a good match.

Audience: One green group had a 'sceptic' in every meeting - and it was their facilities manager. There to bounce ideas off them and it worked really well, bc they're in the discussion from the get go.

JL: Museums in the US are as carbon intensive as hospitals, but hospitals have a lot more facilities officers to run it. So remember how stretches facilities colleagues in museums are, so think of sympathetic strategies to engage with them as early as possible in the game.

Audience: For smaller organisations a 'network' isn't necessarily realistic. However, they can still be carrying out the actions which would result from having a 'network'. We need to acknowledge that even if somewhere has very limited personal resources (half a member of staff and two volunteers for example), they can still make good changes and mustn't be made to feel that they have to measure themselves against an organisational structure which doesn't fit their business. Caution needs to be exercised in how we express and ask for information about sustainability actions, rather than action groups.

Audience: I send examples of good press around others actions to our executive team. They're always keen for good press.

Audience: Check out Julie's Bicycle x Arts Council England 'Sustainable Practice' [Accelerator Programme](#)

Audience: Include everyone! The FoH, security, the cleaners. They're in the building when you aren't and are in bits of the building you never see. They see a lot that you don't.

Q4: Do we need to rethink Oddy Testing if we're going to endorse natural materials?

PG: At the British Library, we have been rethinking how we use Oddy Testing. In the past one of the problems has been that we've tended to take a yes/no approach to it. We'll test this material and if it fails we don't use it, not taking any nuance into consideration. So we need to look at the time scale we're using the material over. So certainly, we might look at using materials that would fail the Oddy test to a certain extent but we'd actually be using the material for only short term activities, even something like using it in a handful of months expo. This might then be perfectly appropriate to use materials that aren't quite as conservation grade. If we understand what materials are and what they're doing, how they will interact with the collections, we can make more intelligent choices re appropriate use of materials and use of sustainable materials in perhaps a way that we haven't done in the past.

Q5: Are there any museum sustainability standards in the UK that museum sustainability networks should be aspiring to?

SK: Check out the Bizot protocol and [National Museums Directors' Council](#). Julie's Bicycle outlined the areas you would work in - see topic headings as a guide. ISO 14001 is only for the environment and it's for all organisations, not just museums. There are a few Bizot protocols, and there's one that V&A has signed up for re. travel and couriering. Couriering in person is the exception and not the rule. The disruption from Covid has shown that sending items without a courier is possible and works well. Travel, environmental conditions - check out those Bizots. The priority now at V&A is to promote that we've signed up to these things, just to get others to sign up but also to communicate how we're enacting these sign ups. We are a global sector, we all need to be doing it together. However, there's no standard.

JL: With LEED Fellow hat on - LEED says even if you're not applying for LEED certification work towards it. Frameworks are so important - Ki Books and BREEAM are examples. All of these are good to use to start thinking about steps holistically - not just ticking a box. Look at it as an opportunity, not a constraint. There are other credits that aren't just about carbon, ex. light pollution reduction to help astronomers see the night sky (Dark Sky) and bird safe glass credit (helping reduce the migratory bird deaths). Use these as they apply to you. The World Green Building Council has a green building system in almost all building countries. Think holistically.

JW: LEED and BREEAM as building management frameworks are wider and include considerations such as access to public transport or evidence that there is a green group. It's really important - once you sign up to something, celebrate it! Communicate it far and wide! When you do your carbon conversion make sure you're consistent. Use the [Defra carbon conversion factors](#) - it's a government scheme which has all

sorts of factors i.e. transport, gas, maybe even air freighting. Contextualise the work you're doing within the SDGs - it's a common language. This could also be a way to get senior management involved. Respond to a higher calling, which impresses senior management to no end.

CS: There's a lot of information of there - even in this conversation there's been loads of tools and resources thrown into the mix. You might feel overwhelmed, but take a big breath. Remember that you don't have to do this alone. Let's work together and continue the conversations! This is just the beginning of the journey and it must be collective. Starting a green network is finding allies and doing it together is the only way. Your green network isn't just in your institution. You can work with other institutions, as we should! Even if you're just one person in an organisations, you can partner with other organisations.

Additional advice from audience

- One of my tactics too is to ask for forgiveness rather than permission - I say to the directors "I've signed us up for this, hope that's OK".
- I've had lots of free help from [Bristol Green Capital Partnership](#) who have some great resources and events.
- One more potential lead - anyone in the west of England look up [West of England Combined Authority green business grants](#) which offer up to 60% subsidy for SMEs investing in carbon footprint reducing tech (solar panels, insulation, lightbulbs, heat recovery, etc).
 - I am in the process of applying for £13,000 for a heat recovery system for our dehumidifiers which will pay for itself in savings in less than three years.
- Check ArtiCheck for information re. virtual couriering.
- re. Oddy testing: Can institutions make test results be made more readily publicly available so that they don't have to be duplicated?
 - Is this something that Icon can champion?
 - Could Icon ESN keep a bank of eco-friendly material test results?
- Agree with the tip to communicate what you're doing even if it doesn't feel *that* impressive to you. I was amazed at how much media interest we got for something really boring (to me) like a lower energy fan in one of our HVAC systems.