

The next act:

Stories of environmental sustainability at the Royal Ballet and Opera

2025/26 Season

Our Organisation

The Royal Ballet and Opera is the UK's home of world-class opera and ballet. We are a cultural powerhouse, bringing together two world-class performing companies in one of the UK's leading arts institutions, supported by more than 3000 staff, artists, creatives and freelancers.

Based primarily at the Royal Opera House in the heart of London's Covent Garden, with production and logistics sites in Thurrock and Aberdare, our work is enjoyed by audiences in our two theatres and globally through the Royal Ballet and Opera Stream, our cinema season and company tours. Our work in schools and communities up and down the country is driven by our curriculum-linked programmes, designed to inspire creativity, widen access to the arts and diversify the future of opera and ballet. These sit alongside industry-leading talent development projects, regional partnerships, our Young RBO scheme and a range of daytime events, family activities, tours, exhibitions and concerts in our Covent Garden home.



Our Plans

This is a collection of stories highlighting our progress in environmental sustainability this year. It showcases the initiatives that have become a reality, sets out our ambitions for the future and celebrates the dedication of our team.

The Royal Ballet and Opera has set targets to reduce our gas, fleet vehicle and electricity consumption to as close to zero as possible by 2035. We have also committed to achieving the Theatre Green Book's Intermediate certification by our 2029/30 Season and Advanced certification by the 2035/36 Season. Given the scale of our productions and the timeframes in which we plan our seasons, these ambitious but realistic targets ensure that we continue to progress.

By becoming a Founder Supporter of the Theatre Green Book as it transitions to becoming an independent, not-for-profit organisation, we further assert our commitment to its aims. The Theatre Green Book is a step-by-step guide for theatres to become more sustainable, which takes into consideration all aspects of running a theatre, from the productions we create to the buildings we perform in, and the operations required to support our work. It not only considers carbon emissions but takes a holistic approach, including biodiversity, water and our suppliers and stakeholders.

Guided by these principles, we will continue to drive forwards on our journey to become progressively more sustainable, reducing our impact as far as we can by 2035.



The Royal Ballet and Opera Reporting

The Royal Ballet and Opera is a National Portfolio Organisation and receives funding from Arts Council England. The organisation reports annually via the Julie's Bicycle Creative Climate Tool based on 1 April to 31 March.

The Royal Ballet and Opera also reports via the Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) regulations based on 1 September to 31 August.

As well as these reporting commitments, the Royal Ballet and Opera undertakes data gathering in many other areas to assess progress.

Appendix A presents a table indicating how the data are gathered. The data presented in this report are presented internally to the Board of Trustees as part of the annual environmental management review.



ROYAL BALLET & OPERA

Points to Note

At present there is no mechanism for accurate carbon calculations in all areas and in some cases the results presented in this report are based on averages, assumptions or estimates. There are also a number of datasets where the assumptions have changed year on year, making comparison over time difficult. Where this is the case, it has been noted.

The carbon calculations have not been externally verified and should not be used as a comparison with other organisations.

The aim of presenting this data is so that we can be as transparent as possible, providing stories of our successes and challenges, so that others can use our experiences to help them on their own sustainability journey.

Although the carbon calculations are not definitive, they can provide an indication of which areas to focus our efforts to have the greatest impact. We have used this report to highlight those efforts, as it is our actions and our leadership that will make change. We don't have space to include everything we have done this year, but it is hoped that this summary gives a taste of our progress.



Our Progress

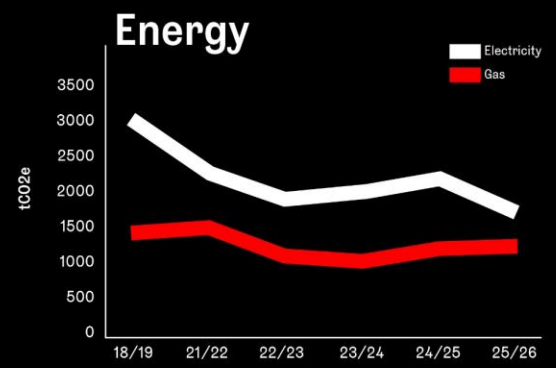
We are reducing our impact on the environment in many areas; the last three seasons have all been certified to Basic standard of the Theatre Green Book, and emissions from many sources are decreasing, although there is still work to be done across the organisation.

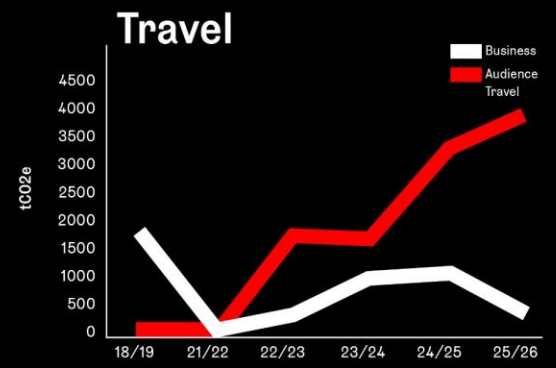
Emissions from **gas and electricity** fluctuate annually but in general show a downward trend since 2018/19. The decrease in our electricity consumption is a combination of electricity-saving investments undertaken over the last two years. Our increase in gas use this year is due to our aging ventilation systems and some equipment failure. The decarbonisation of our infrastructure is a major consideration in our capital programme and appointments have been secured to develop a master plan.

Audience travel is estimated via a post-visit survey. Approximately 90% of the audience surveyed travelled by public transport, cycling or on foot. Emissions increased this year due to an increase in average journey length. We encourage our audiences to use public transport, but as we have limited control over their choices, we do not focus significantly on these emissions.

Business travel includes touring; 2025/26 did not include a Royal Opera Company tour and was therefore lower than the previous year which included both Royal Ballet and Royal Opera Company tours. Comparison of business travel excluding touring indicates that emissions have decreased; staff travelled less distance by air and more people switched from car to train journeys than previously.

The conversion factors we use to calculate carbon emissions from the amount of **waste** we generate were altered in 2022/23 by Julie's Bicycle. It is therefore not appropriate to compare recent waste emissions. Refurbishment projects this season have led to an increase in waste emissions, but efforts continue to try to rehome, reuse and recycle as much of our unwanted materials as possible.







Buildings

The Royal Ballet and Opera has three sites: our historic and Grade I Listed building in Covent Garden, our modern and purpose-built scenic workshops and costume store in Thurrock, Essex and our expansive scenic storage site in Aberdare, Wales.

Decarbonising means removing fossil fuel-derived energy from our operations and we aim to do this by 2035. We use gas for our boilers to provide heating and a small amount in our kitchens and heating in Aberdare and Thurrock. We are currently considering how best to replace the boilers in Covent Garden as part of our capital programme. Our boilers in Aberdare and Thurrock, although still important, are significantly smaller and therefore will be replaced as part of other works at these sites.

In line with the Theatre Green Book structure, this Buildings section considers improvements in the buildings themselves, the water we use within them and biodiversity.



Buildings In Detail

Looking to the future
The Royal Ballet and Opera is developing a capital programme master plan that includes major refurbishment, upgrade and renewal. This year has seen significant progress including approval for initial stages, development of plans for exterior and window works, and hiring of professional expertise both internally and as consultants, to help shape the project. A core feature of this project is to ensure that we prepare our historic Grade I listed Covent Garden home to withstand the impact of and thrive in a changing climate.

Keeping on
Whilst our capital programme is planned and delivered, likely to be over 8-10 years, we need to ensure that we are maintaining our existing facilities. This year has seen the commencement of a significant project to repair and upgrade our ventilation systems. Efficient running of these units reduces our energy consumption and maintains our working spaces at comfortable temperatures.

Biodiversity
This year we have encouraged biodiversity initiatives in our Covent Garden outdoor spaces. Principal dancer William Bracewell designed and installed a dancer's garden on a level 6 balcony overlooking the piazza; dancers can use this space to rest and relax surrounded by nature. William designed the garden with special consideration of the strong winds, lack of shade and limited water in this otherwise exposed space. Our costume team also have green fingers and created a dye garden on a level 5 balcony. The team are harvesting flowers, seeds and leaves to create natural dyes for use in our costume dye workshops.



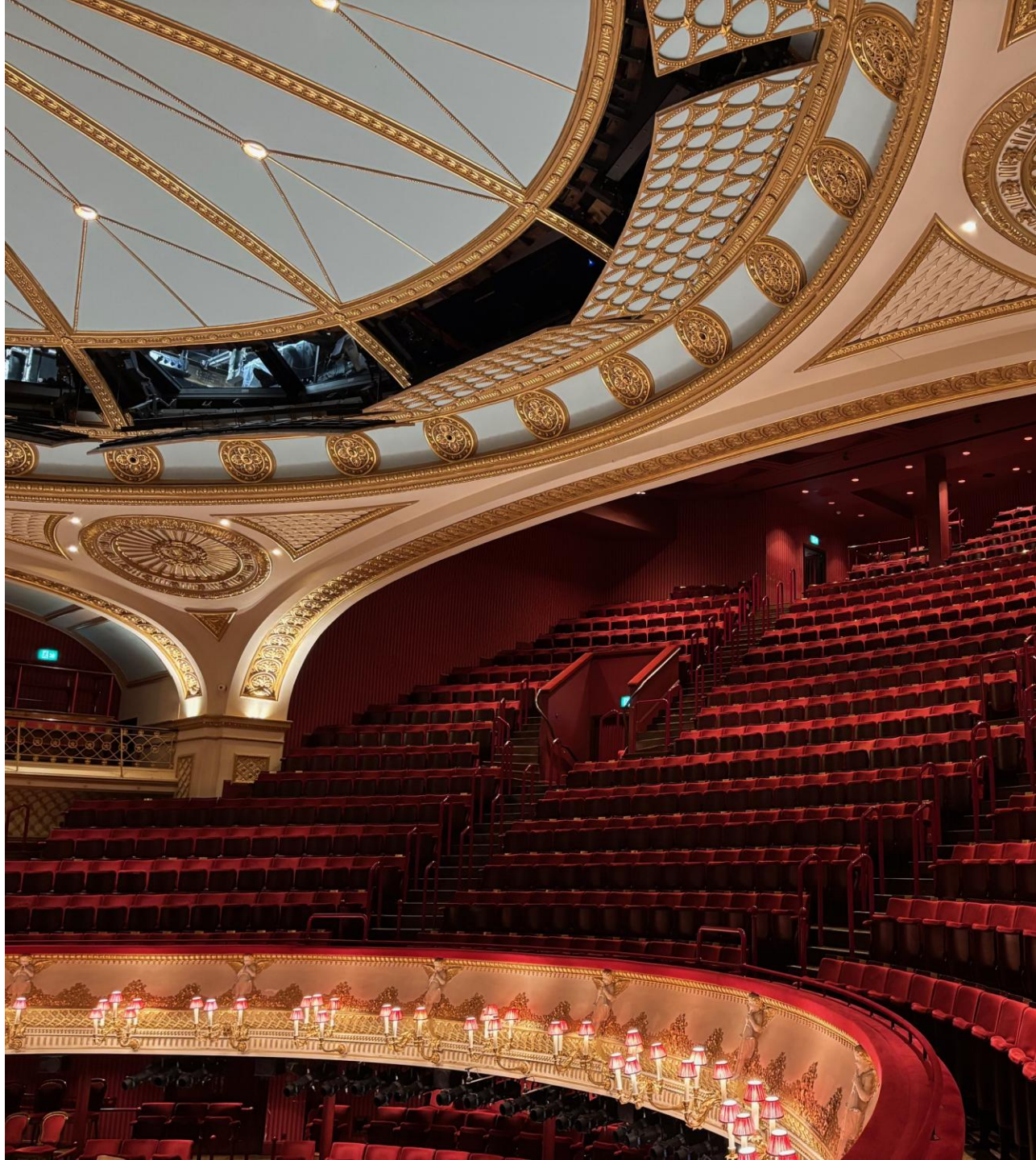
Buildings In Detail

Water
Water is a precious resource and the Royal Ballet and Opera measures and monitors water consumption across our three sites. Our main use of water is the cooling towers on the Royal Opera House. This system was installed during our 1999 refurbishment and uses evaporative cooling to control temperatures in the building. During 2025/26 work was undertaken on the towers to rebalance them, reducing water consumption and minimising losses to the atmosphere.

Winning with washing
The Costume Performance team, responsible for ensuring that the costumes are perfect at the start of each performance, is currently trialling new washing machines. The Wet Care system uses specialised detergents, conditioners and finishing agents along with precise mechanical action, temperature and moisture control to clean delicate textiles like wool, silk and sensitive fabrics. It is gentle on fabrics, reduces water and chemical use, is safer for staff and reduces the number of items sent externally for dry cleaning, reducing our emissions.

Working on waste water
Our Scenic Workshops have been collaborating with Imperial College and Footprint Scenery, a scenic construction company, to identify ways to improve the quality and quantity of wastewater generated during paintbrush washing. This project aims to identify best practice recommendations for the industry.

Waterless facilities
The level 5 toilet facilities have been refurbished with waterless urinals. These replaced facilities that were on a regular flush system – using water every few minutes, whether they were in use or not. The new system involves a special cleaning routine to keep them fresh and water use in this area has reduced.



Operations

Operations is used to describe everything else at the Royal Ballet and Opera that is required to put on our performances, tours and events, undertake our work to bring opera and ballet to wider audiences and maintain and use our buildings.

It is important to us that sustainability is integrated into how everyone works, so that we all understand our role in helping the Royal Ballet and Opera to achieve our ambitions.



Operations In Detail

Energy

Focus on Electricity

Whilst the capital programme progresses, and measures to replace gas are reviewed, our focus has been on electricity. The recent reduction in our electricity consumption has largely been due to the replacement of the auditorium lighting and the initiation of the production rig upgrade.

House Lights

Completed in August 2025, the house lights project was an 18-month-long programme to replace the tungsten lamps and fluorescent exit signage that lit our Grade I listed auditorium. The project, undertaken at night to ensure audiences were unaffected by the works, has resulted in an 84% reduction in electricity consumption for the system and has reduced maintenance requirements and resource use. The tungsten lighting was also a significant heat source, so the replacement with LEDs has reduced pressure on our ventilation system and reduced emissions at the same time.

Production lighting rig

Stage one of the three-part programme to replace the production lighting rig commenced in summer 2025. The overhead rig was the first to be replaced and is estimated to have reduced electricity consumption by 40% compared to the previous tungsten rig. Measures were taken throughout the project to minimise waste; legacy light fittings were sold and donated if they were still useful and around 8 tonnes of the steel structure was recycled. Electricity meters were installed during this work, and we have begun to track power consumption during regularly revived productions so that we can directly compare the electricity use of the old and new lighting rigs when the whole lighting rig has been replaced.



Operations In Detail

Materials and Waste

Our revival model for productions means that our shows are designed to return to the stage year after year. We store hundreds of productions as well as stock items and we resist throwing things away. However, we do produce 22 different types of waste including over 6,000 pairs of ballet shoes a year and 136 tonnes of wood and metal. We look to reduce the quantity of resources that end up as waste by trying to sell, revive, upcycle and rehome as much as possible.

Understanding what we have

Our stores are a treasure trove of interesting things. Understanding what we have is vital to ensure that stock items that are not currently assigned to a production can be reused elsewhere. 'Propsfest' was a weeklong initiative to sort and catalogue props to make them more accessible to designers. Our costume team have also been working through their extensive stock fabric store, creating a comprehensive catalogue. If production and costume designers can see what we already have, they are more likely to incorporate it into their ideas for the stage.

Rehoming

Once we have decided an item is no longer needed, we try to rehome it. We partner with many different schools, community groups, theatres and organisations including Refuge Network International, a charity providing clothes and household items to families in London, Children's S.C.R.A.P. Project, a Hackney based resource centre and A Good Thing, an online platform connecting charities together. We have managed to ensure that a whole range of items have a future life and are not treated as waste.



Operations In Detail

Materials and Waste

Improving Waste Outcomes

For items that are no longer useful in their current state, the only option is recycling. Having large quantities of one material (or streams) means that they can usually be recycled into better quality items. For example, our team in Aberdare store polythene that was historically used to wrap costumes for storage, for collection by Polythene UK, a company that uses it to manufacture more polythene. This is called 'Closed Loop' recycling and is the best way to keep these recycled materials useful for as long as possible.

Fabric Recycling

Last year, the Royal Ballet and Opera was involved in a successful partnership with KAPDAA and the AI4Fibres project which created a mobile sorting facility to categorise waste fabric by fibre type. Knowing the fibre content of clothes and costumes ensures they can be recycled into higher quality products. Although this partnership ended in 2025, the Royal Ballet and Opera is still keen to improve recycling outcomes for our fabrics and so have started working with Avena for collections from our Aberdare stores. This collaboration ensures that our unwanted fabrics are recycled to the highest standard possible based on their condition.

Polystyrene Initiative

We are also looking at how we can collect, use or swap polystyrene. Although it remains a material used across many productions, we are actively seeking ways to minimise the environmental impact of our use. By working with partners across the creative industries to share and repurpose polystyrene offcuts, we can extend the life of existing materials and reduce the need for new products.

ROYAL BALLET & OPERA



Operations In Detail

Travel

Transporting our Sets and Scenery

The Royal Ballet and Opera productions are stored at our facilities in Aberdare; before they are returned to the stage, they are transferred to our workshops for review and refurbishment. The fleet travelled over 246,000km this year. To reduce the impact of these journeys we use bio-diesel where we can; 14% of our journeys were undertaken with biofuel this year reducing our overall emissions by 35%. We also partnered with our haulage contractor Les Jones to test an electric HGV. The results were very positive and have helped us to plan for the future.

Touring

The Royal Ballet and Opera's international reputation for excellence and world leading performance requires that we have a physical presence in other countries. This includes touring by The Royal Ballet and The Royal Opera and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House. We take steps to try to minimise the impacts of our tours as far as possible, taking minimal crew, using local equipment and technicians where we can, transporting freight by ship rather than flying, and ensuring we undertake many performances and visit multiple locations to make the emissions per audience member as small as possible. This year's Royal Ballet tour included Singapore as well as Japan.

Commuting

95% of staff travel to work by public transport, bicycle or on foot. We will continue to monitor commuting to ensure this low level of emissions per km travelled continues, but given the relatively small emissions, it is not a focus of action at present.



Operations In Detail

Digital and Paper

We have already done a lot of work in this area. When you visit the Royal Ballet and Opera you will receive your ticket digitally, and our cast sheets (which are updated daily) are accessed via a QR code or viewed around the building. We have also worked with our printers to ensure we use plant-based inks, Forestry Stewardship Certificated (FSC) paper and now use more easily recyclable materials for our iconic red programmes.

Access to the past

We have large digital archives holding decades of photographs and film footage. Our 'Vault' project is streamlining this to reduce storage space resulting in more easily accessible and searchable items, saving our staff, creatives and researchers time and opening up our treasure trove of memories to more people.

Better for everyone

We have made adjustments to our website and marketing email systems, optimising them so that our website is more efficient and are our emails are more targeted, requiring fewer to be sent but having a greater impact.

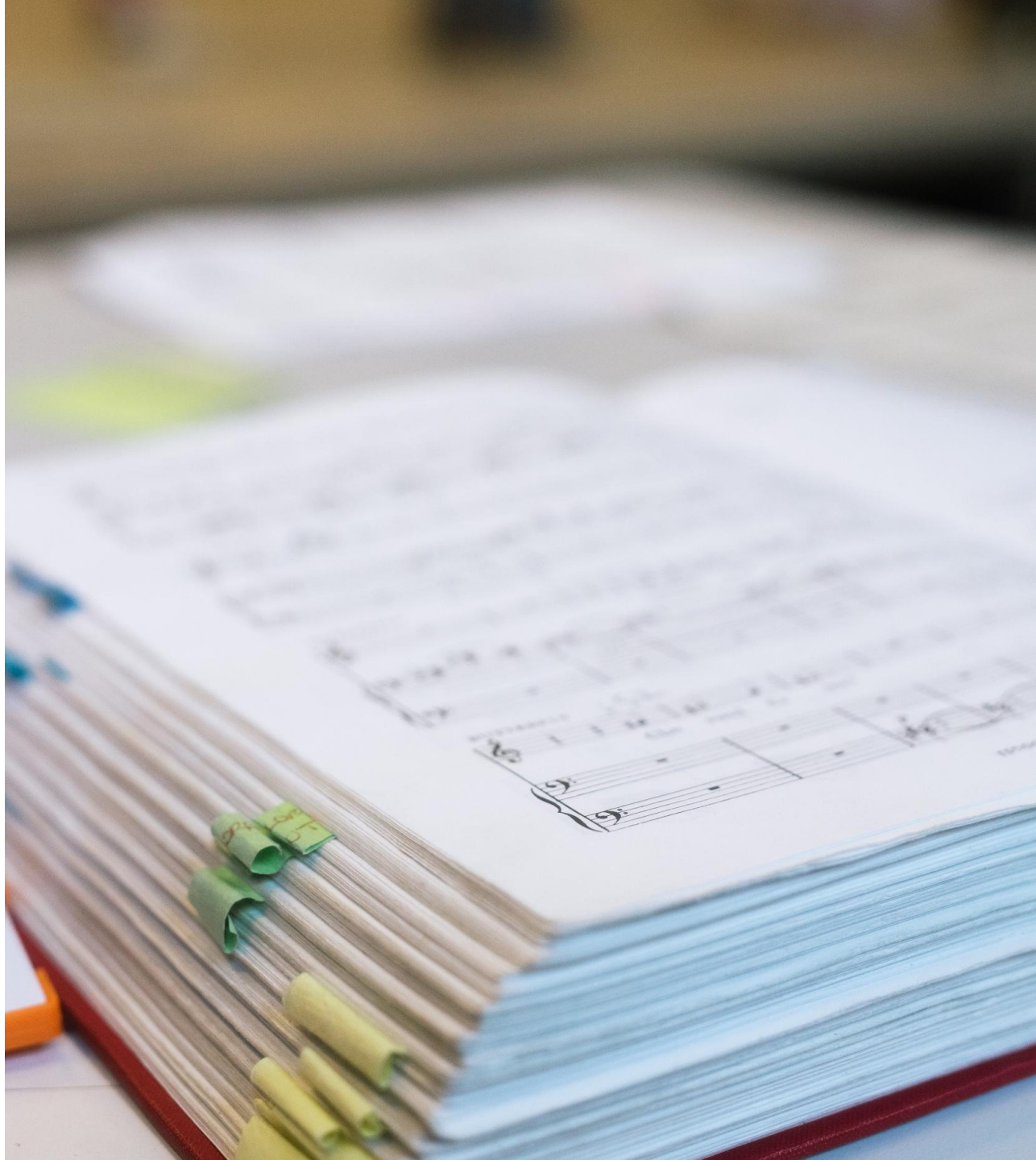
Front of House facilities

The phased replacement of paper towels with high-speed hand driers is reducing our paper consumption (last year we used around 7 million paper towels) and minimising blockages of our pipework.

Digital cleansing

During our Sustainability Strategy Group meetings, we pause mid-meeting to hold a brief 'digital cleanse' reminding people that good digital housekeeping reduces emissions and is good general practice.

ROYAL BALLET & OPERA



Operations In Detail
Food and Drink

Visiting our stunning restaurants, having a cocktail on the terrace or lunching in our café is a wonderful way to experience the Royal Ballet and Opera. We partner with Company of Cooks for our food and drink provision, who share our sustainability ambitions.

Sourcing product
We work with London Larder, a company that helps us source local, fresh and artisan produce. Although food miles are not the biggest emissions from food production, fostering community and supporting local enterprise is important to build resilience. We track the source of our ingredients and the percentage of purchases from our local area.

Food waste
When so much care is taken to grow, move and prepare our food, we want to minimise how much is wasted. In our restaurants, guests are encouraged to pre-order so our purchasing is accurate, our staff and artists restaurants serve food made with the same ingredients so there is always flexibility and we have recently installed AI food waste bins in the kitchens so we can track and identify areas to improve. Our menu contains a zero-waste dish which incorporates left over elements from the making of other dishes and generates no additional waste.

Glass
Although glass is fully recyclable it is heavy, so transporting glass packaged products and then recycling them requires a lot of energy. Company of Cooks have invested in ways to reduce our glass use; in our bars you will see tonic on tap, recyclable kegs and canned craft beers reducing our single use glass consumption.



ROYAL BALLET & OPERA

Operations In Detail

Contracts and Procurement

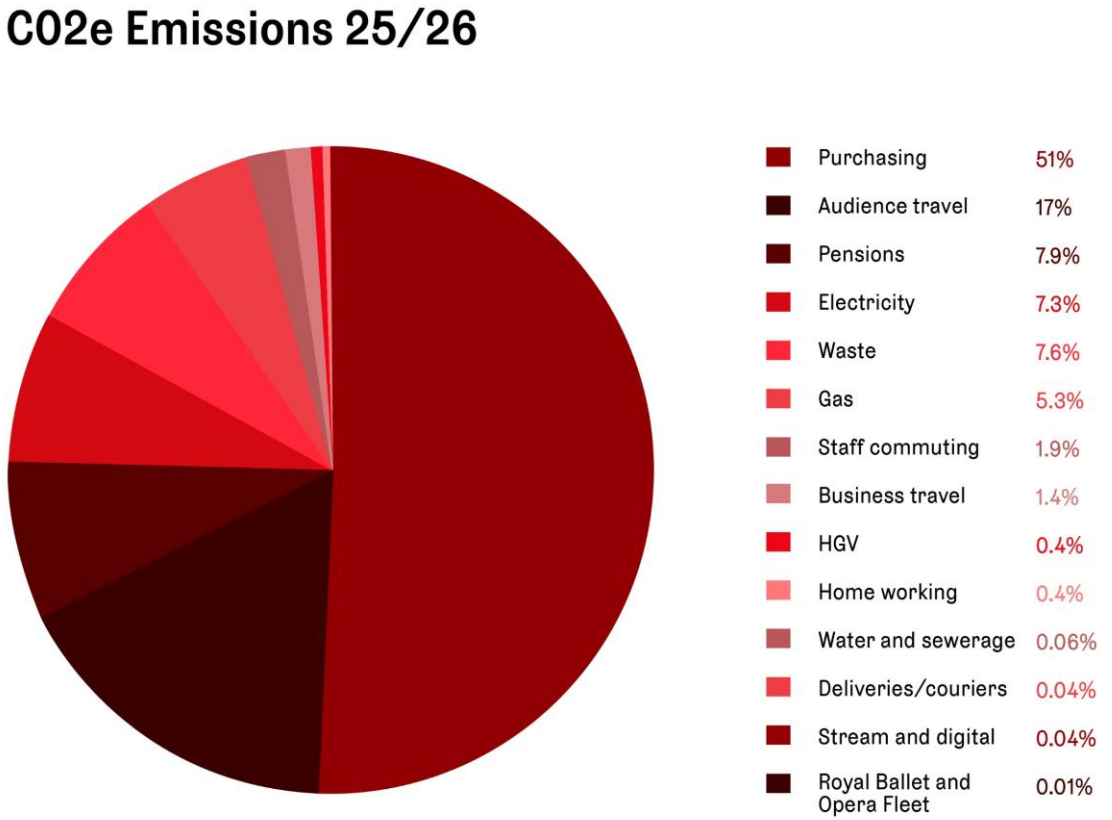
The pie chart shows the spread of emissions as part of our overall carbon footprint. These values are estimates based on the best data we have now. Our current estimate is that around 50% of our carbon footprint is from the products and services we procure from our suppliers. The Royal Ballet and Opera does not have any direct control over these emissions, but we can influence them by choosing suppliers that match our values, and by influencing our existing suppliers to become more sustainable.

Carbon footprint of suppliers

When calculating emissions from suppliers we followed the Green House Gas Protocol methodology, undertaking an analysis using sector average emission factors and the amount of money spent in each sector. We then undertook surveys and workshops to try to refine this information with company and product specific information. We have been working hard in this area for three years and the data improves with each season as more of our suppliers can provide accurate information; estimates of our purchasing emissions have reduced from over 29,000 tCO2e in 24/25 to under 12,000 tCO2e this year.

Cross sector action on supplier engagement

The Royal Ballet and Opera and Theatre Green Book, in consultation with other cultural organisations, suppliers, associations, Arts Council England and Julie's Bicycle, have worked to create a form that can be sent to suppliers to gather sustainability information. The project aims to help organisations learn more about their suppliers, and suppliers to spend less time answering sustainability questions. Once the form is completed, the supplier's information is publicly available on a simple website. The website now has over 100 suppliers listed and is used by museums, theatres, libraries and galleries to gather data.



These percentages are estimates to help focus attention where change can have the biggest impact. Numbers indicate scope. Scope 1 is direct emissions including gas and Royal Ballet and Opera vehicles, scope 2 is indirect emissions from electricity and scope 3 is everything else.

Operations In Detail
Contracts and Procurement

Retail traffic lights
Our Retail team have been testing a Red / Amber / Green rating system for new products. For each item, the team score the product, its manufacturer, origin, packaging and delivery method; the total score corresponds to a colour. We use this to assess the sustainability of a whole range of products and are aiming to increase the proportion of products with a green rating.

Co-Productions and hires
It is common for the Royal Ballet and Opera to undertake co-productions where two or more organisations from Europe and beyond create a new production together. It is usual for one organisation to build the production which is then shown by the co-producers. This ensures a guaranteed future life on different stages, reaching more audiences, but using fewer resources than building the set multiple times.

Hires are productions that already exist but are hired out to other organisations temporarily; again, this reduces resource use and provides an income from stored productions. During the 2025/26 Season, the Royal Ballet and Opera staged 5 new-to-house co-productions and hired out 10 productions to opera houses around the world.

The contracts are the bedrock of these relationships, and we are working to incorporate new clauses to encourage others to work with us on our sustainability ambitions and share data and lessons learned. These clauses will mean better reporting of emissions between organisations so that we can present a complete review of co-production and hire emissions including resource use, transportation and audience reach.



Operations In Detail

Spotlight on Suppliers

The Royal Ballet and Opera works with around 1,800 suppliers each year, providing goods and services ranging from fire extinguisher maintenance to tutu cleaning. Some of these suppliers have gone to extra lengths to work with us in achieving our sustainability ambitions. Below we are highlighting a few standout stories, but these are by no means the only ones.

Pointe shoes

We work principally with two pointe shoe manufacturers (Bloch and Freed); this year both suppliers have helped us with a deeper understanding of their complex supply chains. This led to a visit to the Freed facility in Hackney where members of our costume team could meet the makers (each shoe is 'signed' by its maker) and discuss materials and manufacturing.

Tracing tulle

Serenade, part of the mixed programme *Perspectives: Balanchine, Marston, Peck* earlier this year, was revived with redesigned skirts in line with guidelines enforced by the choreographer's trust. All 40 skirts were remade using OEKO-TEX certified tulle supplied by TFT, whose factory was visited by one of our Costume Production Managers during production. The original skirts were retained and will be reused for rehearsals across ballet productions, ensuring no material is wasted. Existing leotards were also reused and re-dyed to match the new colour palette.

Stage tape

Technical and Stage teams continue to work with Le Mark to identify and develop more sustainable alternatives to traditional PVC tape, a largely single-use product. While progress in this area will take time, Le Mark has made significant efforts to develop lower-VOC options incorporating recycled content.



Productions

We are continually working to reduce the environmental impact of our productions. This Season, we have expanded and maintained our in-house stock of set, props and costume; these items are available for our creatives, designers and production teams to use when creating new productions, to reduce purchases of new items. Trail, a digital asset management system, is being used to catalogue technical equipment and scenery, and is helping to improve visibility of these assets so encouraging reuse and adaptation.

Across our teams, we are encouraging materials to be taken from our existing stock or to be sourced from second-hand items wherever possible. Where new materials are purchased, we are promoting the use of more sustainable alternatives - trialling new materials in our workshops and building our knowledge of natural dyes as part of our commitment to reducing environmental impact.

We are using the Theatre Green Book to help us reduce the environmental impact of our productions. We do this by calculating Theatre Green Book scores for all main stage new productions. The scores are based on the amount of set, props and costume that have been used before and will be used again. Plenty of challenges remain, but we have provided highlights of progress from across the Season here.



Productions In Detail

New Main Stage Highlights

Circularity in Costume

Continued efforts were made this Season to raise our Green Book scores for costume on new productions, focus on reusing in-house stock and more sustainable sourcing. Costumes from the 2006 production of ***Tosca*** were repurposed for this season's new production, including over 30 cassocks for the chorus and surplices. A similar approach was taken for ***I puritani*** for which all petticoats were repurposed from a previous production: 90 metres of fabric was used from the newly established fabric catalogue to create the Puritani Townsfolk's costumes. Across the Season the costume team increased second-hand sourcing from online marketplaces and placed a greater focus on purchasing sustainably certified and lower-impact fabrics.

Stretch and flex

We are working cross-sector to encourage innovation in dance costumes; fabrics for dance must be flexible and strong to allow movement but this reduces the reuse and recycling potential. We are working with others to share learnings and engaging with suppliers to encourage development of more sustainable products.

Scenic Sustainability

Sustainability was a key consideration in the set design for ***The Makropulos Case,*** with the creative team exploring new ways to reduce material use whilst still creating spectacle. The production combined 'slices of reality' - fully realised parts of the set next to minimally processed raw materials. Responsibly sourced poplar Garnica plywood was used for the set build and kept in full, unglued sheets where possible to maximise future reuse potential. The team's approach sparked a wider conversation about sustainability in scenic design, challenging assumptions about how much realism is needed to create an immersive experience for audiences.







Productions In Detail

New Main Stage Highlights

Staging from stock

Efforts to maximise the use of existing stage stock continued across the Season. ***Perspectives: Balanchine, Marston, Peck***, a mixed programme including a new piece by Justin Peck, required several new scenic elements, but existing ballet floors and projection screens were utilised from stock throughout the production. ***Wayne McGregor: Alchemies***, featuring the return of *Yugen* and *Untitled, 2023* with new work *Quantum Souls*, also incorporated existing scenic elements alongside newly created and sourced items. For part of the ***So Are We: León and Lightfoot*** mixed programme, a set was purchased second-hand from the Nederlands Dans Theater, then refurbished and adapted for use, reducing the total amount of new material required.

Circular Ring

Around two tonnes of modular scenic items were reused in ***Siegfried***, the third instalment of Wagner's Ring Cycle. Building a larger stock of these reusable modular elements, including walls, floors and structural components, is a key future focus to improve our Theatre Green Book scores. The cycle has been designed with reuse across all four productions in mind, with major scenic elements like the four-tonne *Die Walküre* tree reappearing throughout the series.

From the junkyard to the stage

While most scenery was built new due to the scale and technical demands of the production, more than half of all ***Siegfried*** props were reused materials. Key to this was the forge and anvil base, constructed from reclaimed wheels, pulleys and metal components sourced from junkyards by the workshop team. Innovative material choices played a role, with bio-based 3D-printed components used to create the gold crystal effect for Fafner's striking costume.



Productions In Detail

Linbury

Progress towards our Theatre Green Book ambitions was also made on the Linbury stage this Season. Its smaller scale makes it the ideal place to test and trial new materials and approaches, an area we hope to develop further over the coming seasons as a proving ground for sustainable practice on the main stage.

Stories from the Season

The modular box set designed for ***Giustino*** was made with future reuse in mind, with adaptable walls and ceiling elements that can be repurposed for future productions. The production also reused a show floor from a Main Stage opera, saving around two tonnes of new material.

The Turn of the Screw, originally delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, made extensive use of existing props and furniture stock from our stores, including beds, chairs, school desks, lampshades and cabinets.

Tales of Love and Loss, a triple production by the Jette Parker Artists Programme, embedded sustainability considerations from the earliest planning stages. Through the reuse of existing stock and innovative materials, such as Ecoboard made from agricultural waste, the production achieved Theatre Green Book overall Basic standard for Productions, with Intermediate standard achieved for both scenic and costume elements.

The cost of computing

This Season the Linbury Theatre hosted ***RBO/SHIFT***, a festival exploring our relationship with AI and its use in the modern world. The programme provided an opportunity to explore the environmental impact of AI technologies with participating artists, with some involving the use of locally run systems associated with a lower environmental impact.



Productions In Detail

Revivals

The majority of productions across the Royal Ballet and Opera Season are revivals. By repairing, repurposing and reusing our sets, props and costumes, these productions follow a circular model of theatre-making that is inherently sustainable and has been practised at the opera house in Covent Garden for over 200 years.

Revival highlights from this Season included: ***La Fille mal gardée,*** which returned 65 years after its premiere for two runs, Kenneth MacMillan's ***Mayerling,*** a Royal Ballet classic first staged in 1978 and Peter Wright's celebrated 1984 production of ***The Nutcracker.*** This Season saw the first revival of Christopher Wheeldon's ballet ***Like Water for Chocolate***, allowing the piece to be enjoyed by new audiences.

The 2025/26 Season also saw the first revival of Richard Jones' acclaimed opera production of ***Samson et Dalila,*** the return of the 1984 production of Puccini's spectacular ***Turandot*** and Richard Eyre's acclaimed 1994 production of ***La traviata.***

On average, 95% of set and props and 90% of costumes used on our Main Stage revivals are the originals, with a small proportion needing to be remade, refurbished or newly purchased.



People

We need everyone's help to reduce our environmental impact. Encouraging and supporting people across the Royal Ballet and Opera, the cultural sector, our local community and beyond is central to how we work.

The Royal Ballet and Opera has two full-time staff dedicated solely to environmental sustainability, a rare commitment for a cultural organisation, and we take the responsibility to share what we learn seriously. We participate in and lead a range of groups, forums and organisations, spreading our learning while keeping our own practice at its best.



People

At the Royal Ballet and Opera

Talking amongst ourselves

This year we refreshed how we talk about sustainability within the Royal Ballet and Opera; we have launched a new Staff Sustainability Action Group, opening up conversations and gathering new perspectives, and we have revitalised our staff engagement events. Sessions included a natural dyes workshop, and a talk by Prof. Christopher Merchant, a specialist in atmospheric science.

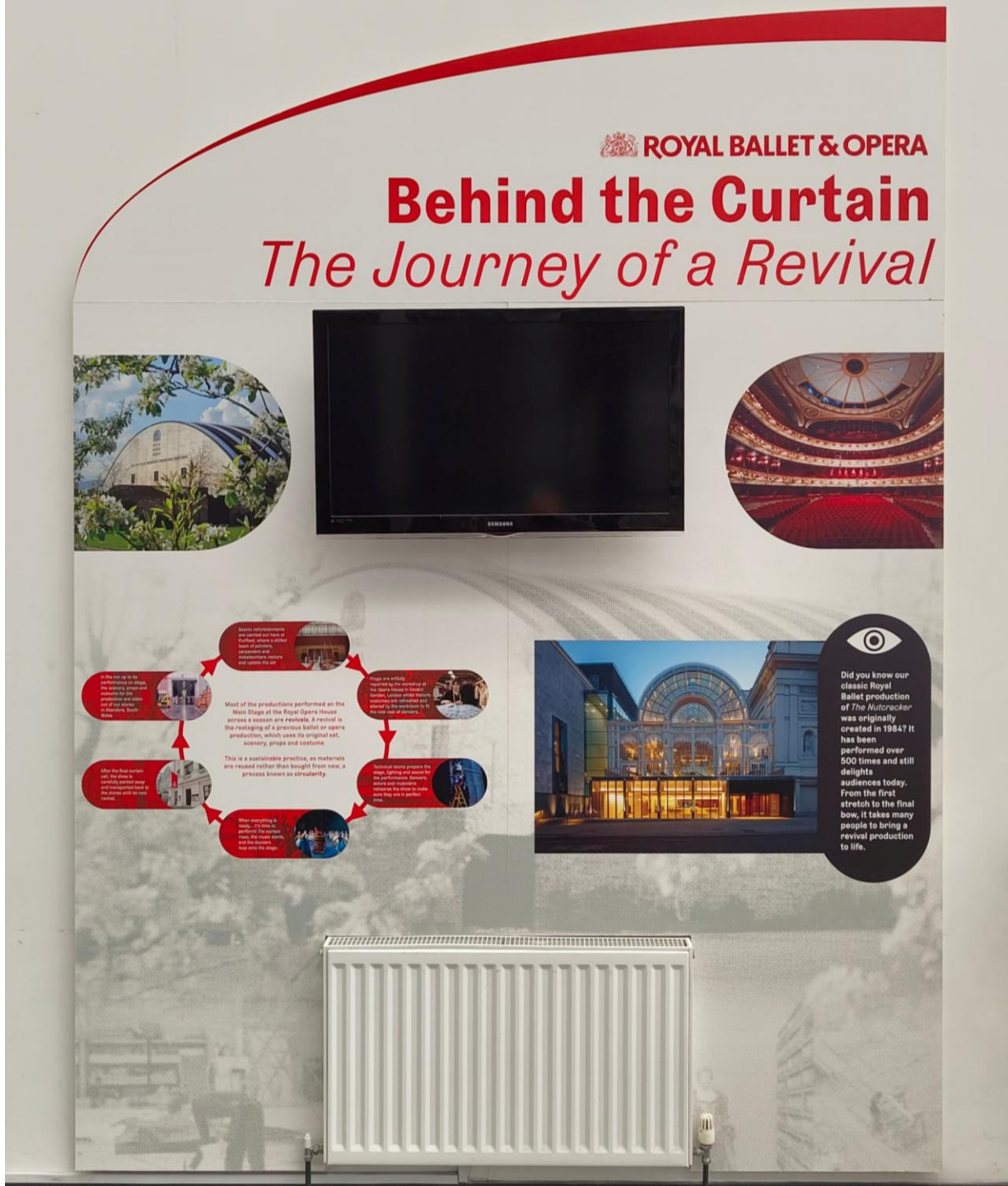
Great Big Climate Action Month

Our staff events culminated in a month of activities for the Royal Ballet and Opera's Great Big Climate Action month in June. This included a bookbinding workshop, an upcycled jewellery sale, a talk from our costume team and a lesson in junk journalling. It was all rounded off with a showing of the People's Emergency Briefing film; nine climate specialists talk about the science of climate change and how it is affecting our lives. We followed the screening with a discussion session on actions we could take as individuals, within our teams and as an organisation.

Celebrating success

The costume team are working sustainably in so many ways that they decided to make it the focus of their talk to the public as part of our *After Hours* tours. The team spoke about the dye garden, their commitment to finding sustainable fabrics, and how they reuse and repair as much as they can, all emphasised with some glorious costumes from our recent productions. Similarly keen to start conversations about sustainability, our Schools, Tours and Exhibitions teams worked together to create new wall information at our Thurrock workshops, celebrating the sustainability work of our teams there.

ROYAL BALLET & OPERA



People

Our Community

New local network

Response to the impacts of climate change requires a local as well as national response. With the support of Westminster City Council (WCC), the Royal Ballet and Opera has established a local network; the Westminster Cultural Sector Sustainability group, where local cultural organisations share knowledge and skills and talk about borough wide sustainability issues.

Cool Off in Culture

'Cool Off In Culture' is a new initiative by Julie's Bicycle and British Film Institute to encourage people to cool off during extreme heat in nearby cultural spaces. WCC is running a similar service called 'Cool Spaces'. The Royal Ballet and Opera is proud to support both these initiatives to encourage anyone to use our building to escape the heat.

Sustainability from the start

Thinking about sustainability from the start of the design process makes it easier to create sustainable productions. Over the last two seasons we have been working hard with two groups to support this work: established creatives that are designing our productions now, and students who are the designers of the future. We have conducted workshops to understand the barriers that our creative teams face in making their designs more sustainable and are using their feedback to adjust our processes.

We reach the student community through our Learning and Participation programmes including our Design Challenge brief and Continuing Professional Development sessions with teachers. Sustainable design is central to our Design partnership work with schools and music services and a running theme in our articles for the Design & Technology Association's Designing Magazine.

ROYAL BALLET & OPERA



People
Nationally and Beyond

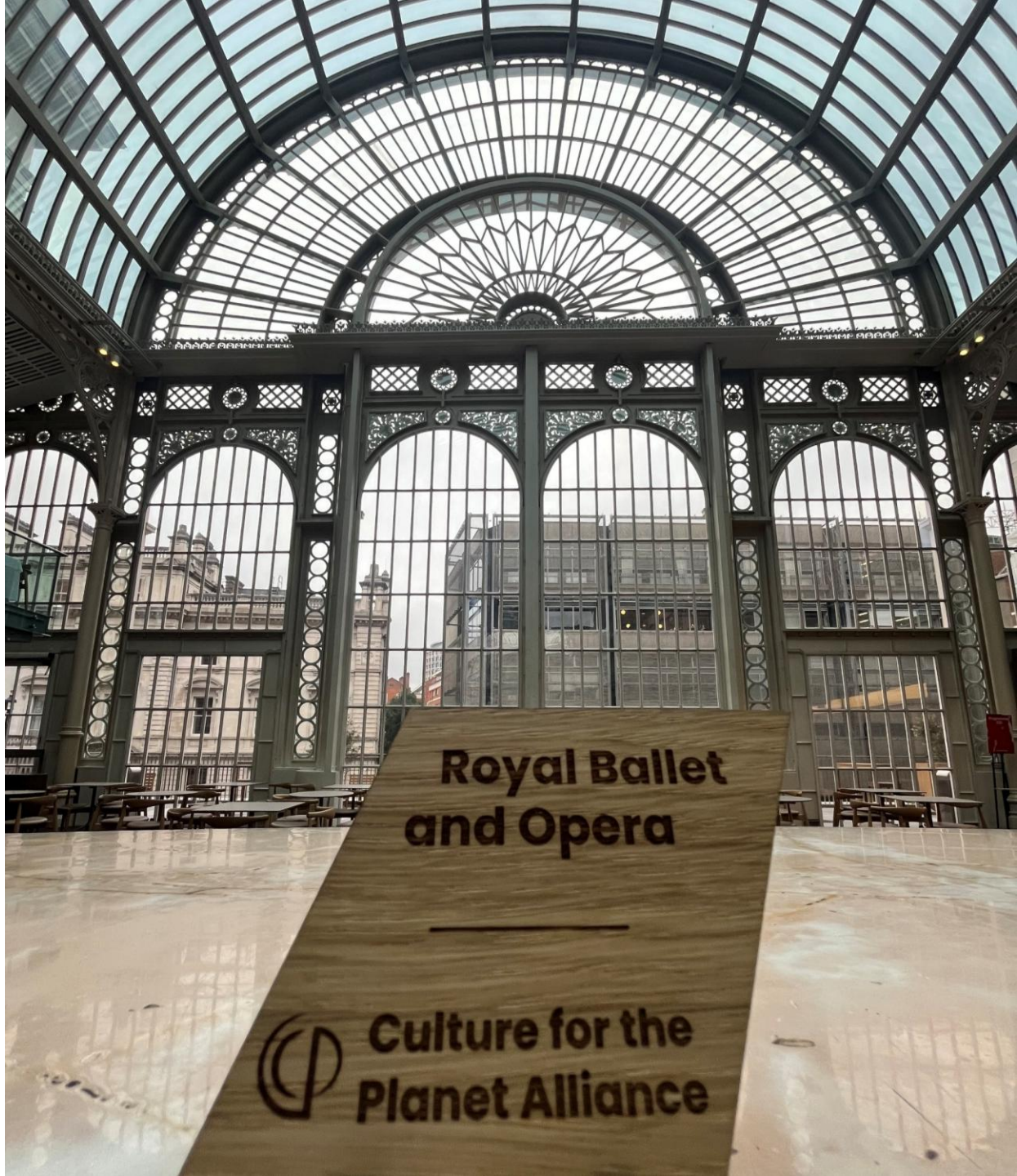
Friends and Young RBO
At the Royal Ballet and Opera we like to engage with our audiences and the Friends and Young RBO Sustainability Forum allows us to present our plans and activities to a small group of people enthusiastic about sustainability. This group provides an invaluable range of experience, ideas and feedback. This Season the group were treated to a back of house tour to meet with some of the teams they have been hearing about.

Opera Europa
During November 2025, the Royal Ballet and Opera was pleased to host the first in-person gathering of the Opera Europa Heads of Sustainability group. This jam-packed day included a training session, group discussions and workshops, although for many the highlight was meeting long-time colleagues in person for the first time.

Restage
Our focus on circularity and reusing materials continues with our collaboration with ReStage, which is developing reuse centres and improved infrastructure for set deconstruction and storage. This year we contributed to the review of ReStage's long-term strategy and our stores team participated in a workshop on the development of a circular economy for scenery in Wales.

Culture for the Planet
Culture for the Planet is a global community of practice, bringing together cultural organisations from across the world. Convened by University of Lausanne and Zurich University, it is taking the work of the Theatre Green Book, and others in the cultural sector and stimulating a shared research-led initiative together. As a founding member, the Royal Ballet and Opera was present at the inaugural conference where we added our wooden ‘tile’ to the mosaic and committed to the declaration to work together.

ROYAL BALLET & OPERA



The end of the year

The 2025/26 Season has been full of stories of sustainable successes. Our ongoing Theatre Green Book Basic certification and our organisation-wide commitment to achieving net zero and Intermediate and Advanced certification show that the Royal Ballet and Opera will continue to progress in this journey.

Environmental sustainability is integrated as part of the Royal Ballet and Opera's culture; increasingly staff and artists are using their own initiatives, making suggestions and incorporating sustainable practice into their own roles. This has been supported by our sustainability team through guidance and policies and team specific workshops.

We are continuing with our efforts to embed circularity into our operations; reusing, rehoming, repurposing where possible, and only then finally recycling. We have continued to build relationships and create new networks to pass on resources that are no longer needed but still useful.

As perceived leaders of sustainability in our industry we have been using that position to influence the wider cultural sector. We have been reaching out to creative teams to influence productions at the earliest stages and working with our suppliers to help them be more sustainable. We have been sharing our successes and our challenges and supporting and encouraging others through the Theatre Green Book committees, Opera Europa sustainability committee and Westminster Cultural Sector Sustainability group. Our staff talk regularly at industry events and conferences and participate in forums to share our findings and learn from others. With these actions at the sector level we are aiming to help move everyone together, making it easier for all of us to progress towards a more sustainable future.



Looking forward

Next year will see further work in all of these areas; continuing to encourage each team to take ownership of their own plans, providing team specific information and guidance, streamlining reporting and reviewing our organisation-wide training provision. We will be taking further action to reduce our energy consumption and emissions through our capital investment programme and will progress with our plans for decarbonising our Covent Garden building.

For our productions, we intend to increase the use of and investment in modular scenery, as well as encourage further engagement from creative and producing teams with sustainability during the design process.

We will continue to monitor our progress against the Theatre Green Book and will undertake more actions that will move us closer to intermediate certification.

This report is important in celebrating our successes and it is with great excitement that we look forward to the challenges and achievements of next year.



Thank you

This report celebrates the successes of the whole of the Royal Ballet and Opera. These achievements would not have been possible without the ideas, dedication, enthusiasm and encouragement of everyone at the Royal Ballet and Opera. Thank you for your effort and hard work.

We are making a difference every day.

ROYAL BALLET & OPERA



Appendix A

Data Reliability

Data	Source	Reliability
Electricity consumption	Bills and meter readings	High
Gas consumption	Bills and meter readings	High
Water and sewerage	Bills and meter readings	High
Audience travel	Emailed survey of attendees, taking a sample of around 2500 responses. Attendees were asked for the home postcode and mode of transport used to cover the largest distance. Overseas postcodes were removed and managed separately. These are not included in audience travel data, however domestic flights were.	Low
Staff commuting	Survey of staff requesting postcode, main mode of transport and frequency of travel. Response rate around 60%	Medium
Digital	Based on estimates provided by service providers	Low
Purchasing	Spend analysis of purchasing for one Season. Uses nationally available emission factors. Refined where company or product specific data has been provided. No external verification of company specific information.	Very Low
Waste	Waste reports from each location. Emissions calculated based on Creative Climate Tools emission factors	High
Business travel	Based on expenses claims, travel bookings. Young performers, auditionees, and artist travel where the Royal Ballet and Opera has booked the travel are included.	Medium
HGV movements between sites	Invoiced	High
Deliveries	Emissions provided by courier services	Medium
Home working	Based on % of staff in a role that allows flexible working, following the policy of two days working from home per week	Low
Fleet vehicles	Log of distance of each journey	High

Understanding how data has been gathered helps to decide how much weight to give the results.

We will try to improve reliability of the data but including these estimates in our footprint calculations helps us to decide where to focus greatest attention for action.

Appendix B
Picture Credits

2. New Royal Opera & Ballet branding on the flags, Royal Opera House exterior ©2024 Laura Aziz
3. Speranza Scappucci, Richard Jones' production of Puccini's *La bohème*, The Royal Opera ©2024 Mihaela Bodlovic
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