
Carbon Literacy at the V&A

V&A

The V&A ran its first Carbon Literacy training course, delivered by SOS-UK (Students Organising for Sustainability) between February and March 2021. Over three sessions, the course provided a strong action-led approach, raising awareness around the carbon costs and environmental impact of both individual actions and organisational behaviour.

All participants were invited to reflect on their own power and sphere of influence. This training provided a highly practical approach which helped identify the strengths and opportunities of job roles, inviting attendees to put this into practice and come up with two carbon saving pledges designed to involve not only themselves, but also a group of colleagues. For example, the Administrator for the Learning and National Programmes team shared that because of the course, members of the Learning and Digital Programmes teams signed up to a carbon saving food pledge, committing to 1 – 2 days a week of eating vegetarian or vegan meals. Over a year, this will save 2.65 tonnes of CO₂ — almost the same amount 10 hectares of woodland would need around 30 years to absorb.

While sustainability was something the Learning Department had been already thinking about, the past months have made this more urgent, strengthening the need for a collective effort. It therefore seemed logical that the next step in the sustainability commitment would be a substantial review of supplies of educational resources, whilst also shifting towards a more sustainable approach to programming and sourcing workshop materials. The team are currently in the first phase of the project, which entails recycling or donating excess materials to local groups and charities. The second phase of the project will focus on reviewing the amount, type, provenance and purchase systems of the materials they use, coordinating the procurement of supplies across teams to reduce travel miles and waste as much as possible.

While we hear about climate change every day, it can be difficult for individuals to find opportunities to learn about its causes and take action. As a trusted organisation, the V&A have an important role to play in using its collections to show historical origins and intersections between climate change and climate justice. The V&A's Learning Department is committed not only to changing its ways of working but also to offering learning opportunities that empower all participants to play their part.

This case study is adapted from a blog written by Emily Grassi, Administrator, Learning and Development Team at the V&A. The blog can be read in full [here](#). Since the time of writing, the V&A now have 34 Carbon Literacy certified members of staff and are planning a third round of training in early 2022. This training sits in the wider context of a sustainability-focused learning and development programme at the V&A.