

Arts and Culture at COP26



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Lewis Coenen-Rowe
and Wallace Heim

CREATURES



Top: 'The Landing Hub'.
Photo: Alexander Hoyles.

Bottom: 'The Fifth Giant (or What Would You Do?)'
Photo: Regina Mosch.

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Summary

Lewis Coenen-Rowe and Wallace Heim

COP26, which took place in Glasgow 2021, saw an outpouring of the artistic and cultural activity that has come to accompany these global climate conferences. The confluence of arts projects has become integral to how a COP is represented, not only in the media, but on the streets, in the buildings, and over the landscapes of the host places. COP can provide a unique opportunity for artists and cultural organisations to make new work, extend existing practices and engage new audiences.

This report has been created by Lewis Coenen-Rowe, culture/SHIFT Producer at Creative Carbon Scotland, and researcher and artist Wallace Heim. It was commissioned by CreaTures (Creative Practices for Transformational Futures), a project investigating the power of creative practices to move the world towards socio-ecological sustainability.

Our enquiry into the roles of arts and culture around COP26 looks at what can be learned from this unique context for arts-making – for artists, environmentalists, members of the public and researchers. Our concerns are with how these activities offer opportunities for artistic experimentation, for climate communication, for public participation, for making science and data tangible, and more. The arts at a COP are not a curated festival. What takes place evolves out of specific relations between arts, civil society and activist organisations, according to what practitioners can do and the spaces afforded to them. Each COP location will make a different collection of artworks possible. Each year that passes will change the imperatives expressed.

We suggest the factors that make the COP context for the arts unique, including its ‘circus-comes-to-town’ quality; the media attention; the division between the official COP and what happens outside; the potential to influence policy; and the focus on one city. COP26 was postponed by the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting the planning of civil society organisations and artists, who adapted their methods for engaging with public and the scale of what could be achieved. Lewis Coenen-Rowe offers a personal reflection on COP26, a description of the city and what was offered during those days, and what may last in memory.

For this report we offer three ways to categorise the works and events according to their relations with the city and list projects within each category. Of course, many projects defy categorisation. We have called these ‘wildcards’ and mention several. For each category, Wallace Heim provides case studies chosen for their methods of engagement with the public. These are based on interviews with the practitioners, drawing out their reflections on what the projects offered to their own arts practices and to the public; how COP26 had instigated and affected the projects; what changes in support and funding structures would help; and what they learned that would be useful for others.

Category 1 is ‘Taking it to COP26’. These projects involved gathering creative work to bring to COP26 itself, either through bringing material contributions to the city or through using digital means. Many of these examples are characterised by a first stage of building connections and collectively creating or gathering artistic work, followed by a stage of bringing together work to be shown in Glasgow. The two case studies drew in members of the public from across Britain and internationally. They also exemplified different artistic approaches. ‘Let it Grow’ by Oi Musica offered a specially composed song and score online to the public to perform, record, and share, with live performances in Edinburgh and Glasgow. ‘Stitches for Survival’ offered the idea online for crafters to stitch a panel about climate change and COP26, with the panels to be stitched together, displayed on a Glasgow Green, and then re-purposed as blankets donated to charities.

Category 2 is ‘Taking COP26 elsewhere’. These projects used COP26 to increase awareness of climate issues and COPs using the arts to provide opportunities for participation that would not otherwise be possible. The case study is ‘The Fifth Giant (or What Would You Do?)’, created by The Bare Project as part of Lyth Arts Centre’s longer-term project ‘The Land for Those That Work It’. The artistic and collaborative processes of ‘The Fifth Giant...’ align with socially and ecologically engaged practices. The project looks at land, environmental justice and climate colonialism, issues that also ran through COP26 in Glasgow, but addressing those questions in ways distinct to the Caithness region.

Category 3 is ‘Public spaces at COP26’. Public spaces and venues hosting cultural activities and civil society events are important and exceptional aspects of public involvement at COPs. The venues may be arts and cultural centres, civil society spaces, re-purposed buildings, outdoor areas, and specifically created temporary spaces. The creating, curating and managing of these spaces is, in itself, part of the creative work of COPs, contributing to their reach, social texture and their potential for education and dialogue. The case study is ‘The Sustainable Glasgow Landing’ including ‘The Landing Hub’, a temporary space on a brownfield site near the official COP26 venue. The space negotiated diverse approaches to climate change and sustainability and varied audiences, with exhibitions, performances and events.

Coenen-Rowe summarises the key trends and lessons from COP26 relating to audiences and access; communication and collaboration; the digital; energy and capacity; flexibility; funding; location; the long-term; and the purpose of projects. He draws on these to offer advice for those planning for the future, including considerations around timing, communication, and collaboration. The report ends with an extensive list of arts and cultural projects around COP26, with links to further information.

The planning for COP26 in Glasgow relied on the extensive and collaborative work of civil society organisations, individual artists and cultural organisations. A key project for COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and COP28 in the United Arab Emirates, will be to sustain these connections and develop communication with counterparts in the upcoming host cities and countries to pass on the lessons that have been learned and support ongoing arts and cultural engagement with COPs. The political and social context in the COP27 and COP28 locations will be extremely different to in Glasgow and the UK and those planning to continue work will need to work closely with local counterparts to ensure that the approaches used are helpful.

Introduction

Lewis Coenen-Rowe

What is COP?

The annual United Nations climate conference, known as COP, is the main context where decisions on international climate change policy are debated and formalised. COP stands for 'Conference of the Parties', with the 'Parties' in this case being the member states of the United Nations. Each year COP is hosted by a different country and takes place in a city in that country. Conferences are attended by delegates representing UN member states as well as 'observers', who might include researchers, charity employees, lobbyists, businesspeople and more. Usually COPs have two main spaces: 1) a closed 'Blue Zone' run by the UN and open only to delegates and official observers that contains negotiating spaces, event spaces and pavilions devoted to individual countries and issues; 2) a more open 'Green Zone' run by the host nation with installations, events, and stalls, although the level of openness has varied substantially between COPs.

In addition to these official spaces, COPs have increasingly been used by people and organisations seeking to leverage action on climate change. As a result, COPs are now surrounded by side-events, protests and cultural programming within the host city. Indeed, for many this COP 'fringe' provides their main method of engaging with the event, which is largely closed-off from the public. Beyond the host city, it has also become more common for events and programming to be planned in other locations to coincide with COP as a 'hook' to justify climate or environmental themes.

It is worth noting that COPs are only one part of a longer-term decision-making process. An interim session is held between each COP and many details are already worked out in advance of the conference itself, which tends to focus on resolving key disagreements and providing an opportunity for UN parties to display what they are doing and build political connections.



Inside the COP26 'Blue Zone', showing the sculpture *Gaia* by Luke Jerram.
Photo: Catriona Patterson.

A banner and lantern sculpture at the Shine a Light event run in Glasgow on the first day of COP26.
Photo: Lewis Coenen-Rowe.



What does arts and culture have to do with COP?

Organising around COPs has increasingly involved a prominent role for arts and culture, ranging from artworks installed in conference venues by the organisers, to fringe events run by arts venues, to the use of creative methods by activists. However, it may not immediately be clear why arts and culture should have a role in conjunction with a conference discussing the technicalities of international climate policy.

A significant reason is that COPs have become not only a meeting for those ultra-technical debates but also a high-profile opportunity for winning over hearts and minds, utilised by climate justice advocates and fossil fuel lobbyists alike. It is also simply a topical excuse to engage members of the public on climate change. In this context, arts and culture have a clear role to play in communicating issues, bringing people together, making complex science tangible, providing opportunities for participation, provoking debate and more. The social nature of many arts practices allows them to take on roles that scientific and political methods usually cannot. It is this 'eco-social' form of artistic practice that this report focuses on, highlighting participatory and experience-led work more so than distinct artworks.

Some of the roles that arts and culture take here are not so different from what they might ordinarily do when creating work that engages with climate change and many arts and cultural contributions are still aimed at ordinary members of the public rather than conference delegates. However, there are factors that make the context around COPs unique and offer unique roles for arts and culture to play during them.

Factors	Roles
<p>‘The Circus Comes to Town’: COPs last for two weeks when thousands of international delegates come to the host city alongside campaigners, the media and others. The host city sees a sudden influx of people and an equally sudden departure.</p>	<p>The arts can help secure a greater legacy from the two weeks through creating permanent new art works or running public engagement work that leads to lasting changes. Arts venues can act as hubs for activity, providing space for artistic work or for civil society organisations visiting the COP host city (see below ‘Spaces and Venues’). This helps counter organisational difficulties and provide capacity for the many events and activities taking place during the COP period.</p>
<p>‘The Eyes of the World’: COPs see dramatically heightened media attention brought to their locations with reporters looking for colourful material.</p>	<p>Arts and culture provide an eye-catching topic for media to focus on and thus can reach wider audiences and help shape public debate. During COP26, the press was actively looking for artistic work to cover. Campaigners and activists at COPs regularly use creative methods to obtain media attention</p>
<p>‘Inside-Outside’: COPs involve a contrast between official talks and the fringe that occurs outside, leading to disconnection and tension. Equally strong disconnections can occur between residents and visitors, or among delegates with different beliefs or languages.</p>	<p>Arts and culture can help foster greater connection, offering a depoliticised space for discussion and helping people see outside of their own narrow goals. The arts can also be used as a method to bring messages from the fringes into official spaces, as evidenced by several projects that have gathered and presented messages through creative means (see below, ‘Taking it to COP26’).</p>
<p>‘The Ear of World Leaders’: Many of the world’s most influential people attend COPs, presenting an opportunity to target decision-makers.</p>	<p>Artistic projects around COPs might be specifically planned to reach delegates through using locations they are likely to see, adopting targeted subject matter or methods, or operating inside the official space. The latter requires care to comply with United Nations rules about the roles of art in conferences.</p>
<p>‘A Time and a Place’: Despite its international relevance, attention during COPs is focused overwhelmingly on the host city.</p>	<p>Given that most people are not able or not interested in visiting the host city during COP26, arts and cultural practices can be used to involve people from further afield in conversations or bring messages from the frontlines of climate change to the host city (see below, ‘Taking it to COP26’, ‘Taking COP26 elsewhere’).</p>

What happened at COP26?

The 26th United Nations Climate Conference (known as COP26) took place in Glasgow, Scotland from 31st October-13th November 2021. COP26 was originally planned to take place in November 2020 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the UN Climate Conference normally takes place every year, COP26 was particularly important because it took place five years after COP21 in Paris and was thus the conference where details - known as the ‘rulebook’ - around the execution of the 2015 ‘Paris Agreement’ were to be confirmed and where countries were supposed to update and strengthen their pledges on reducing greenhouse gas emissions - known as the ‘ratchet mechanism’.

Results of the COP26 negotiations included deals on coal, deforestation and methane, as well as the Glasgow Climate Pact. The Pact ‘requests’ countries to submit more ambitious targets in time for the COP27 conference in Egypt, creates a Glasgow Dialogue on funding for loss and damage caused by climate change, and pledges to double funding from member states to help adapt to climate change. It also calls for a ‘phasedown of unabated coal’ and ‘phase-out’ of ‘inefficient’ fossil-fuel subsidies. The text given here in quotation marks was all heavily contested and arrived at after long debate.

COP26 also saw some failures. Richer nations failed to find the \$100billion that had been promised to help fund poorer nations to act on climate change. New pledges still pointed towards warming significantly higher than the agreed target of 1.5 degrees with 40 countries failing to submit updated pledges at all. Calls for a Glasgow ‘Loss and Damage Facility’ were blocked by the USA and European Union. Many also argued that the wording that was finally agreed in the Glasgow Climate Pact was too weak and ambiguous to be effective.



A COP26 negotiation space.
Photo: Catriona Patterson.

The COP26 landscape

Lewis Coenen-Rowe



The Scottish Event Campus (left) and Glasgow Science Centre (right) used as the venues for the Blue Zone and Green Zone respectively.
Photo: Stephen O'Donnell on Unsplash.

COP26 took place under unusual circumstances. Originally scheduled for the end of 2020, it was postponed by a year to November 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The postponement intended to ensure that as many delegates as possible were able to attend in person. However, many delegates, especially from poorer countries, were still unable to attend in person in 2021 due to lack of access to vaccinations or inability to afford accommodation for self-isolation, leading some to raise concerns over the validity of the process. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic also affected side-events planned around COP26, most of which instituted strict testing systems or shifted towards online platforms.

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The conference itself took place at the Scottish Event Campus, located on the banks of the River Clyde in Finnieston west of the city centre. The location was unusual in its proximity to the city centre, with COPs normally taking place in out-of-town conference centres. This meant that the conference was relatively more visible to Glasgow residents and delegates were more likely to mix with locals. The central location was also a factor in the high police presence, including a large contingent from London. Roads and cycle paths adjacent to the site were closed for security purposes.

Beyond the official conference, key organisations working on the fringe included the COP26 Coalition, which brought together local and international civil society organisations to advocate for climate justice; and the Climate Fringe, a project by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland that supported and funded fringe activities and events around the COP that would facilitate greater participation. The Scottish Government mounted a campaign and events series including a 'Scotland's Climate Ambition Zone' at The Lighthouse, while Glasgow City Council hosted various events at City Chambers and supported 'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing' venue (see below, 'Public spaces at COP26'), although neither were official participants in COP26, which was technically hosted by the UK government.

Key events across the fortnight included a 'Leaders' Summit' on the first few days of COP26, attended by heads of state and accompanied by several announcements, followed by themed days across the rest of the conference. Elsewhere, a major 'Fridays for Future' march organised by youth strikers took place on 5 November and an international 'Day of Action' on 6 November, organised by the COP26 Coalition, followed by a 'People's Summit' that sought to provide an alternative to the official conference. The summit itself wrapped up a day later than planned on 13 November due to ongoing negotiations.

Key issues for COP26 included:

- **Climate justice**, which is the idea that climate change is a moral as well as technical issue, entangled with issues of social justice. This manifested through debates over the unequal historical responsibility for and current impacts of climate change for example.
- **Article 6 on 'carbon markets'**, which created a provision for trading carbon 'credits' in a way that some felt would allow businesses to sell on their emissions rather than actively reduce them.
- **Loss and Damage**, which refers to impacts of climate change that already cannot be prevented and cannot be adapted to or protected against, such as the flooding of island states. Those in places most vulnerable to climate change have argued that financial support must be offered to help people with this.
- **Reparations**, which refers to the way that wealthier countries are also those that have produced the greatest carbon emissions and therefore ought to be responsible for paying for mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change.
- **The influence of fossil fuel companies on the process**, which may have been lessened this year given that none of the official sponsors were fossil fuel companies. Nevertheless, many attendees at the conference were fossil fuel lobbyists.



Musician and activist Ana Tijoux performs at a rally held at Glasgow Green during COP26.
Photo: Midia Ninja.

What this meant for arts and culture

The special context for COP26, the impact of COVID-19 and the issues at play also fed into the roles that arts and culture played. The postponement of COP26 and uncertainties around whether it would go ahead at the planned new date and whether it would take place in person or online, made advance planning difficult. Projects planned in early 2020 had to find ways to keep developing across a year longer than they had planned. Conversely, the two-year gap between COP25 and COP26 meant that some were able to plan in a way that would not have been possible otherwise.

The presence of COVID-19 meant that many people were discouraged from attending in-person events. As a result, organisers tended to favour a larger number of smaller scale events, outdoor activities, permanent installations that people could visit at their leisure, online activities, and at-distance mass participation projects (see below 'Taking it to COP26'). However, it is likely that COVID-19 did limit the effectiveness of artistic work organised around COP26.

Arts and cultural contributions did play a role in promoting certain key issues, with a strong emphasis on climate justice and drawing international connections between Scotland and locations on the frontlines of climate change. Some work sought to directly confront issues highlighted above, such as the *Still/Moving* light installations, which carried direct messages like 'Loss + Damage', or the *Hell Bus* created by artist Darren Cullen, which targeted oil company Shell's self-promotion. However, much work was relatively distinct from the issues under discussion at COP26, focusing instead on more specific locally relevant issues or on individual behaviour change.

Arts and culture were present across many locations and contexts during the COP26 period:

- **Within official venues:** The Blue Zone included a variety of artistic works displayed in corridor, foyer and gathering spaces, including Luke Jerram's sculpture *Gaia* hung in the central 'Action Zone' space. The Green Zone artistic installations and discussion panels featuring artists including Brian Eno and Ben Okri.
- **Within arts venues:** Many arts venues in Glasgow including the Centre for Contemporary Arts, the Briggait, Tramway and others chose to organise themed programming in the lead-up to and during COP26.
- **Within civil society venues:** Venues like the Climate Fringe hub at Adelaide Place or 'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing' on the Broomielaw (see below, 'Public spaces at COP26') chose to include artistic work, while events like the People's Summit for Climate Justice involved several arts-led sessions.
- **On the streets:** Artistic contributions were featured as part of street theatre, outdoor installations, shop window displays, rallies and protests (see below, 'Taking it to COP26').
- **Beyond Glasgow:** many arts and culture projects planned for COP26 took place at a distance and used it as an opportunity to engage people locally, (see below, 'Taking COP26 elsewhere').
- **Online:** the COVID-19 context also provoked numerous digital artworks or performances that took place purely online as a means of allowing safe participation.

A personal reflection on COP26

Lewis Coenen-Rowe

In 2019, when COP26 was announced as coming to Glasgow, I was living in the west of the city, around two miles from the conference location. The announcement was greeted with excitement from local environmental groups and collective meetings quickly started to plan how to work together to use the occasion. In December 2019, I organised an event to bring together people from the cultural sector to talk about planning for COP26 and the room was packed out. Excitement was in the air even though nervous mutterings about 'coronavirus' were already beginning. In March 2020, we found ourselves in lockdown and all our planning meetings had to move online. Not long after, the postponement of COP26 was announced, with no new date given.

Eventually COP26 was announced as postponed to November 2021. The two-year long period leading up to this was beset by uncertainty with details about the logistics of the event only revealed very late, due to ongoing concerns over COVID-19. Almost all organising had to take place online, which created immense barriers to participation and movement building. There were upsides to this. With working groups meeting online, it suddenly made no difference if someone was joining from Glasgow, London, New York, Harare, Bogotá, Santiago, or Kuala Lumpur, and all sorts of international connections were created. I detected the influence of this among the artistic work presented around COP26, much of which featured connections between geographically distant locations.

The final weeks ahead of COP26 saw the construction of immense temporary buildings to extend the space already provided by the Scottish Event Campus. Rumours spread that someone had built a giant wooden ark on a hillside in Argyll, which turned out to be true. Accommodation in the city had already been fully booked for months, flats were offered on Air BnB for exorbitant rates, and the Homestay Network were finding spare rooms, beds and sofas offered by Glaswegians to make available for visitors to the city. And still people struggled to find space. Outrage spread at hearsay that President Biden had chosen to stay in Edinburgh instead.

A group of activists began a squat at Baile Hoos. Streets and cycle lanes were blocked off. What looked like temporary fortresses were constructed around parts of the city. Heavily armed police appeared on bridges.

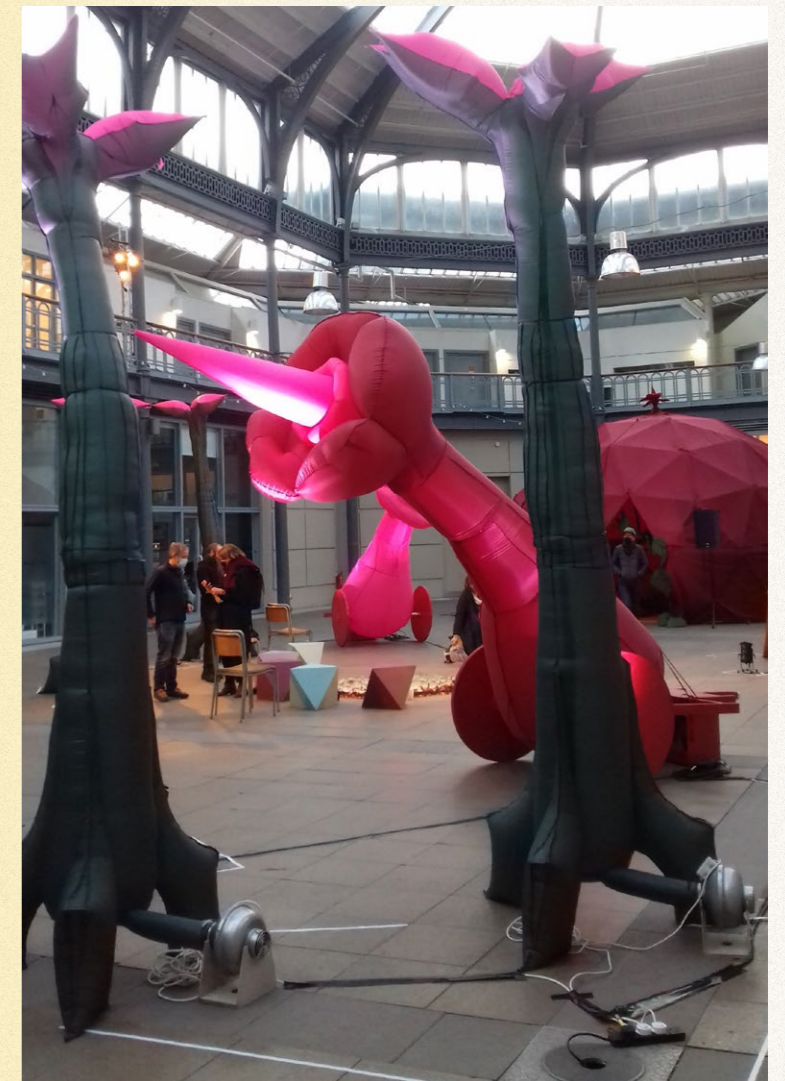
Finally, delegates began to arrive, and the streets filled with suited individuals attempting to navigate the Glasgow transport system. Delegates were provided with a pass that gave them free, integrated travel across buses, trains and subway, much to the annoyance of local campaigners who had been pushing for the same measures for residents for years. Welcome signs appeared on local businesses and outlets of multinational corporations; on churches, mosques, and gurdwaras; on schools and universities.

During COP26, I tried to experience as many of the different facets of the event as possible, attending the Blue Zone as a registered observer, visiting artistic performances and installations, and participating in activist discussions.

The official venue was largely windowless and often so loud with urgent conversation that presentations had to provide the audience with headphones to hear what was being said. It is clearly difficult to develop meaningful roles for the arts in the Blue Zone, where strict UN rules determine how the arts can be used.

The contributions that sparked the most interaction were informative, such as a sculptural visualisation of waste in the textiles industry created by Generation of Waste. There were several sculptures on display but the manic atmosphere of COP26 was hardly conducive to pause and reflection. Some of the most effective artistic contributions offered people just this opportunity. An event at the 'Peat Pavilion' offered people time to watch a slow-paced artistic film and touch a soil sample, offering the much-needed chance to rest and reconnect.

Elsewhere in the city, I visited artistic installations and events including Michael Pinsky's *Pollution Pods* at Gartnavel Hospital; the *Encampment of Eternal Hope* at The Briggait; exhibitions and events at the Centre for Contemporary Arts; the *Climate Portals* at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland; an event about the *Let it Grow* project at the Pipe Factory; Darren Cullen's *Hell Bus* at the Gal Gael Trust; the Minga Indigena's space at the Hidden Gardens; Es Devlin's *Conference of the Trees* at SWG3; and Carnival Arts' *Shine a Light* procession along Glasgow Canal. I saw the *Walking Forest* pass by; visited Robert Montgomery's *Grace of the Sun* installation at 'The Landing Hub'; and witnessed the meeting of the giant puppets Storm and Little Amal.



The *Love Cannon* sculpture at the *Encampment of Eternal Hope*, The Briggait.
Photo: Lewis Coenen-Rowe.

I was struck by how different events unexpectedly had totally contrasting audiences. One was full of art students, another, members of Extinction Rebellion, another, lots of people wearing official COP26 branded facemasks. Others were much more mixed. Each provided a different kind of atmosphere, but the most powerful of these contributions succeeded because they developed out of longer-term work that had been done ahead of COP26 to build a message, a mission or a community. Attending these, I felt like I was just witnessing the next stage of a longer project that would continue to grow after COP26 had left. Others I walked away from feeling unchanged.

Attending activist spaces, I was struck by the prominent role given to arts and culture. The opening event organised by the COP26 Coalition featured songs from native American delegates and a traditional Gaelic foot-washing ceremony accompanied by bagpipes. Movement assemblies at Adelaide Place took place among displays by *Pintando Murales Derribamos Muros* and *Climate Change Creative* and were followed by nightly 'open mic ceilidhs'. The Climate Fringe even hired a dedicated arts co-ordinator. This was all coming from environmental organisations without any mandate for arts and culture. They just thought it was important.

On 12th November 2021, the COP26 venue was already being deconstructed amid ongoing negotiations. Artist Xavier Cortada attempted to save a tree sapling that had been temporarily installed. New homes were sought for leftover conference furniture. I wondered what would become of the artistic work created for COP26. Would it also be abandoned and disappear? Would it find a permanent home? Which of the many projects that I'd seen develop over the past two years would find continuity and permanent results? And which would sink? In December 2021, COP26 job contracts funded by environmental NGOs were winding up. Negotiators and volunteer campaigners alike had disappeared for much-needed rest. By 2022, COP26 already felt like a distant memory, but reminders do persist: the Fearless Collective mural in the Merchant City district, Mary Ellen Carroll's *Indestructible Language* installation beside the M8 motorway. The real test now is whether the immense upswing of energy that arts and culture put into COP26 will lead to long-term changes in Glasgow and Scotland or whether we'll look back on it as a temporary moment that came and went.



Protesters pass by the St Enoch mural in Glasgow.
Photo: Midia Ninja.

Categories and case studies

Lewis Coenen-Rowe and Wallace Heim

The outpouring of arts projects and events that accompany COPs is a phenomenon in itself. The projects, their subject matter and practices, can be inflected by a view of what a COP is or should be. Some call out to the official COP, to explicitly declare ideas and issues that should be paramount. Some bring the many voices of the public to a COP. The works might fit within an artist's existing ecological arts practice, or COP might present the chance to do something new.

To help understand this outpouring we have grouped key examples under three categories, which also provide the basis for our four case studies.

- **Taking it to COP26** encompasses projects that involved specifically creating artistic work, programming or projects to be brought to Glasgow in the lead-up to or during COP26 itself. This includes the production of more traditional artistic works, engagement projects, and collective-making projects that helped people produce work that was then brought to the city. Often the emphasis of these projects was on trying to influence the milieu around COP26 or the outcomes more directly, but not necessarily.
- **Taking COP26 elsewhere** involves projects that took place at a distance from Glasgow and generally did not seek to influence the outcome of the talks. Rather, this category is about finding routes for participation for people who would otherwise feel very disconnected from the COP process, using the occasion of COP26 to promote local climate action, or actively opposing the COP process and attempting to create alternative visions.
- **Public spaces at COP26** highlights how arts and cultural organisations are some of the most important public-facing venues and thus provided key spaces during COP26, including explicitly artistic activities but also space for discussion and movement building, both within Glasgow and beyond. This category emphasises these more practical resources. Further, we think that these are more than 'spaces', but are, in themselves, part of the creative manifestations of a COP.

We are also alive to the fact that these categories are not all encompassing and some of the most interesting arts and cultural engagements with COP26 completely defy categorisation. As a result, we will also highlight some 'wildcard' examples throughout this report.

The three categories for arts at COP26 were chosen not by the arts practices or subject matter, rather by the relation with Glasgow as city host. The four case studies were chosen because they appeared to offer interesting ways of navigating that relationship and for their methods of engagement with the public. We believed that talking with these artists might lead to finding out about their practices and experiences that would be useful more widely.

The case studies are structured by interviews with the main artists and practitioners. The interviews draw out their reflections on what the projects offered to their own arts practices and to the public; how COP26 had instigated and affected the projects; whether they would do anything similar again; what changes in the funding and support structures would benefit further ecologically-socially engaged work; and what they learned that would be useful for other practitioners, COP-related or otherwise. The case studies are not critical evaluations of the projects. Rather, the case studies allow practitioners' voices to be part of this report.

Some responses did recur. The effects of COVID-19 lockdowns brought financial and staffing pressures, exacerbating the time-deadlines and logistics of working to fit with COP26, especially for those projects in Glasgow. Exhaustion was commonly mentioned, but also were the ways in which those pressures allowed the artists and practitioners to stretch their capabilities, required them to invent, adapt and do things they would not have done otherwise. A dissatisfaction with the official COP was an undercurrent, as a motivation to make work and as a judgment about those global processes.

Wildcard: Hell Bus

This work by artist Darren Cullen sought to draw attention to misleading marketing created by the fossil fuel company Shell. The exterior of the bus was painted with a parody of Shell's marketing while the interior contained a miniature museum that again used the style of Shell's own branding to highlight inconsistencies between external promotion and internal policy. The bus was located outside the Gal Gael Trust for the first week of COP26 and moved to the Glasgow School of Art for the second.

Category 1: Taking it to COP26

Lewis Coenen-Rowe and Wallace Heim

This approach to art practices around COP26 involved gathering creative work to bring to COP26 itself, either through physically bringing material contributions to the host city or through digital means. Many of these examples are characterised by two stages: a much longer first stage of building connections with people and collectively creating or gathering artistic work, followed by a much shorter second stage of bringing together work to be displayed prominently in some form during COP26 itself. Some projects also include an important third stage of then redistributing the work back across locations or repurposing it after COP26 finished. The relative prioritisation of these phases varies among the projects. For some, the main purpose was to create an awe-inspiring display that would influence COP26 delegates or others present in the city during the talks by visually demonstrating the passion of thousands of people. For others, the process of gathering work and ability of this process to create or strengthen movements and provide learning opportunities was the main purpose behind the project.

This approach is well suited to working with non-professionals and many of these projects used the process of creating artistic work as a way of engaging members of the public, drawing people into a movement or encouraging them to consider a particular issue. The process of co-creating artwork as part of a wider project provides a non-threatening way into climate movements as well as a quite literal way of feeling connected to a collective effort, which offers a gateway for participation in climate movements more generally. Many of these projects also focused on gathering messages or demands from participants, using the project to amplify the voices of people who could not be present at COP or who resided in locations that were facing the most significant climate impacts.



Minga Indigena elders are welcomed to Glasgow with a traditional Gaelic footwashing ceremony.

Photo: Midia Ninja.

Examples of projects creating work with members of the public

1.5° Film Challenge

A project by Film Access Scotland helping people from around Scotland create 1.5-minute-long films about climate change. This number was chosen to highlight the target of no more than 1.5°C warming set by the Paris Agreement. Film Access Scotland organised training in filmmaking techniques in locations around Scotland to provide people with the skills they would need to take part so that the project could be equally open to amateurs and professionals. The films were screened during COP26 and at events in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow afterwards.

LAND

This project from EcoArt worked with residents in Dumfries and Galloway making flags inspired by maritime warning signals that carried messages about climate change. The flags were carried by tall ship to Glasgow and installed at 'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing' venue during the conference. Since COP26 EcoArt have continued working with communities to make new flags and have toured these around Scotland.

Message in a Bottle

An initiative from Taigh Chearsabhagh Arts Centre that helped people living in the Outer Hebrides share their experiences of and perspectives on climate change with decision-makers. Participants were encouraged to find discarded plastic bottles, which regularly wash up on the west coast of the islands, write a message and put this in the bottle. Taigh Chearsabhagh gathered these messages to send to COP26, holding an event at 'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing' in Glasgow to present the messages as well as events in North Uist and a display at Taigh Chearsabhagh.

Moths to a Flame

A project from the Art and Energy Collective that worked with participants in Plymouth to create 20,000 paper moths and accompanying recorded messages about energy systems and climate change. The moths and messages were installed in the Kibble Palace in Glasgow's Botanic Gardens during COP26.

Pilgrimage to COP26

A more literal example of 'bringing it to COP', this project from A+E consisted of a pilgrimage from Dunbar to Glasgow where participants walked across the Scottish Central Belt to Glasgow with numerous events and interventions held along the route. Participants could walk the whole route or just a stage of it. The Pilgrimage climaxed with an arrival in Glasgow on the opening day of COP26.

Another benefit of this approach is the potential to bring contributions to Glasgow from people based all over the world. Artists – those from the global south in particular – can face financial barriers to bringing work to COPs. There were increased barriers associated with attending COP26 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the global inequality of access to vaccination. Some projects sought to address this by gathering contributions from artists based outside of the UK and presenting the work during COP, either physically or through digital means. This was important for making the perspectives offered by artistic contributions around COP26 less skewed towards a Western perspective, especially given that COP25 was moved from Chile to Spain, making COP26 the fourth consecutive COP held in Europe. Some of these projects focused simply on gathering and presenting work from artists, others were set up as a process of exchange where groups based in Scotland and abroad were in contact over an extended period, sharing ideas and learning from each other.

Examples of projects gathering and co-creating international artistic work

Climate Change Creative	A project from artist Fadzai Mwakutuya that gathered creative work from artists around the world, and especially Zimbabwe, to be promoted and displayed during COP26 through a digital gallery, poster exhibitions at Govanhill Baths, Adelaide Place, and through shop windows as part of the window displays project organised by Climate Fringe.
Climate Portals Festival	This installation at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland consisted of a shipping container that contained a large screen. The screen connected with other equivalent 'portals' located in Iraq, Mexico, Palestine, Rwanda and Uganda, providing an opportunity for visitors to converse with people on other continents. Many of the participants were musicians and the portals provided opportunities to share songs and make music together via the video connection.
Cultura Planetaria	This 'artist' organisation from Chile was initially created for COP25, which was planned to be hosted in Santiago before being moved to Madrid. Instead, the organisation worked with partners in Scotland during the lead-up to COP26 to share and promote climate focused artwork from creators based in Chile through events like the COP26 Coalition's 'People's Summit' and the 'Open Mic Ceilidhs' held at Adelaide Place.
Phone Call to the World	This project from Scottish Youth Theatre was funded as part of the British Council's 'Creative commissions for the climate', which explored climate change and environmental crises through art, science and digital technology. Phone Call to the World created connections between young people from Scotland, South Africa, Palestine, England and India. They worked together to learn about how climate change was affecting each of their locations and produced multimedia artworks that were hosted on an online platform and presented at an exhibition at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow.
Pintando Murales Derribamos Muros (By Painting Murals We Tear Down Walls)	This project initially developed from the Cultura Planetaria organisation and involved gathering images of climate change themed murals created by artists working in the global south, which were displayed in a digital gallery as well as at Adelaide Place during COP26. The project also worked with venues in Glasgow such as Scottish Opera to create new murals for COP26.

Map of Glasgow indicating locations of arts and cultural activities and venues for COP26.

Arts installations and events in italics
Organisations in bold

Taking it to COP

- 1** *Moths to a Flame* at **Botanic Gardens**
- 2** *Shine a Light* at Clay Pits nature reserve
- 3** **Art of Change 21** events and exhibits at **Glasgow University** and **Hunterian Gallery**
- 4** *Climate Portals* at **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland**
- 5** *Stitches for Survival* at Glasgow Green
- 6** *Let it Grow* performance at Govan Square

Taking COP elsewhere

- 7** *Govan Free State* at **Gal Gael Trust**

Public Spaces at COP

- 8** COP26 Green Zone
- 9** **New York Times** Climate Hub
- 10** **Rachel Carson Centre** at **New Glasgow Society** HQ
- 11** **Centre for Contemporary Arts**
- 12** **Landworkers Alliance** at **Civic House**
- 13** **Climate Fringe** at Adelaide Place
- 14** *The Sustainable Glasgow Landing and The Landing Hub*
- 15** *Encampment of Eternal Hope* at **The Briggait**
- 16** **Architects Climate Action Network** at **New Glasgow Society** East
- 17** **The Dream Machine**
- 18** **Tramway** and **Hidden Gardens**
- 19** **Govanhill Baths Trust** at The Deep End

Features mentioned elsewhere

- 20** *Indestructible Language* at Kinning Park
- 21** *No New Worlds* at Govan Docks
- 22** COP26 Blue Zone
- 23** *Pollution Pods* at **Gartnavel Hospital**
- 24** Scotland's Climate Ambition Zone at **The Lighthouse**
- 25** George Square and City Chambers
- 26** *Fearless Collective Mural*
- 27** **The Pipe Factory**

Case study 1: 'Let it Grow' and 'Enough is Enough'

Wallace Heim

Introduction

A gift. A beautiful new song, given freely, for anyone to sing or play, where they are, alone or with others. At its simplest, this is what the project 'Let it Grow' and the song 'Enough is Enough' are to me. Against the trading and bartering and transactions of the official COP26 negotiations, to offer a gift is as resistant an action as a protest or manifesto.

Street band music, choirs of all abilities, collective celebrations and the lyricism of a song show, in their own ways, how communal music-making can bring a joyousness to expressions of climate concern, without diminishing or trivialising either the artforms or the sensibilities communicated. An ethos of climate justice underscored the project. Ecological ideas from academic and other sources were taken, translated and re-formed into artistic production.

'Enough is Enough' was written collaboratively. The lyrics by Karine Polwart adapt the imagery of the tree, bird, fish and bell that derive from the historical legends of St Mungo, the founder and patron saint of Glasgow. The project title comes from the song's lyrics derived from a children's rhyme about St. Mungo: "Wherever there is a tree that never grew - let it grow!"

Oi Musica and partners adapted to pandemic lockdowns with an online and social media call to members of the public to perform the song, to record it on whatever device was to hand for it to be included online. Contributions came from grass-roots organisations, community ensembles, musicians, schools, and more, allowing thousands of people to participate and be 'present' during COP26.

I spoke with Oli Furness, the Project Lead, about the collaborative creativity; the challenges of acquiring new skills and confidence in quick time; the goose-bumps of performances; frustrations with the funding systems of Scotland; her disappointment with COP26 itself; and the joy of music-making.

'Let it Grow' invited anyone to perform the newly composed song and instrumental score 'Enough is Enough' and to post a video of the performance online at www.letitgrow.scot

- Oli Furness and Marcus Britton, Co-Directors, Oi Musica
- Karine Polwart, composer, lyricist and singer
- Heather Macleod, Director, Soundhouse Choir
- and thousands of singers and instrumentalists

Interview

The song, the ideas, the collaborations

Oli: We wanted to create something that people would feel passionate about singing. Initially, the idea was to stage a live performance in Glasgow during COP26 in 2020. And then, when the pandemic hit, we realised that the idea could become a mass participation project because it would have to be pandemic-proof and potentially digital.

The idea came from Oi Musica. We saw potential in a new composition focused on COP, but our fears were around coming across as preachy. We know the reasons for climate change. We know about the ice caps. We've seen the polar bears. Do you change your lightbulbs and drive a bit less, or is the problem bigger than that?

Oi Musica was in conversation with the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEALL) in early 2020 about bringing a programme of street bands to a festival they were planning for COP26. WEALL could weave speakers and discussions into a day of music, engaging people who would happily watch a band with a drink in hand and learn something about climate and well-being economics in the process. Then our creative minds started ticking: "What if we did a big, collaborative performance with a choir alongside the programme of street bands?"

Then the pandemic hit and the plans went into disarray, but we'd already fallen in love with the idea of creating this piece of work. Those early conversations with WEALL were important in germinating the idea. The concept of 'enough-ness' comes directly from their philosophy about de-growth. We need to learn to live within our means. Although they weren't in the room for the creative discussions, we were taking on their message.

Karine Polwart, singer, at Govan performance 'Enough is Enough'.
Photo: Louise Montgomery.



Oi Musica commissioned Karine Polwart, and together with Heather Macleod from the Soundhouse Choir, Marcus Britton, a brass specialist, and myself, a percussionist, the four of us co-wrote the piece. It needed to be structured so that an all-abilities choir could sing it, and so that drummers, percussionists, brass and wind players of varying abilities could be involved. The piece starts small, but grows into a hopeful explosion of collective music making.

What Karine came up with was infinitely more emotional and beautiful than we had dared to imagine. She has this incredible ability to say so much with very few words and she doesn't drive a point home. Her imagery of the tree, bird, fish, and bell, was fantastic because it is universal and it is rooted in Glasgow.

We were clear that Oi Musica is not an activist or campaigning organisation. What we wanted to do was speak to people who were not activists but who maybe had a bit of space in their life for thinking about the climate or expressing a view. Our conversations were with people who would like to do something that felt achievable.

The effects of lockdowns

Oli: All our plans came crashing down with the pandemic. We had to do a huge amount of stabilising work because Oi Musica's entire income depends on bringing people together through music. 'Let it Grow' came out of that necessity to reimagine what we were doing.

When we moved our youth and music programs online in March 2020, we set up a YouTube channel and started making daft little videos to keep our musicians' creativity going. They were totally home-made, completely lo-fi – a chance to experiment. But it led us to create a film where we invited people to send in clips. That built our confidence to take on something bigger. Our regular structure had gone out the window, and 'Enough is Enough' was definitely a product of that.

Creative Scotland was supportive and let us re-purpose some funds to pilot our idea and compose 'Enough is Enough'. We released the song as a music video, and invited people to sign up if they were interested in learning the piece. It went viral! By January 2021, we had received 550 expressions of interest. It felt like an exciting opportunity and worth investing the crazy hours needed. Working at the kitchen table, working at your laptop in bed at night, everything was just chaos.

'Let it Grow' / 'Enough is Enough' as online videos

Oli: I loved all the videos. One of the commissions, from Brussels, which is in three different languages, really moved me. The piece from Cuba, which was lo-fi, just filmed on phones, got me as well. Anything involving kids just straight away ... I cried so many times through the autumn as things were building up, as people were sending things in. There's something incredibly moving about people coming together to play music. There was a video of Leeds City Council, the councillors in their official garb standing in Council Chambers singing 'Enough is Enough', which was amazing.

'Let it Grow' / 'Enough is Enough' as live performances during COP26

Oli: I've never been involved in an intervention like our performance in Govan Square in Glasgow. It was more of an action than a performance. There were 150 singers, 50 street band players, and a sea of people in the audience singing along. It gave people the opportunity to use music to say something on their own streets - right across the river from the COP talks. There were children, families, people of all ages. And we created something powerful together. I'm grateful to Vision Mechanics and their giant puppet STORM for hosting us as part of their event that day.

But despite the positive response to what we were doing, nobody was able to book us to perform. We had to scurry around to find our own resources to play live. The Soundhouse Choir brought resources. We did, too, and we had a little sponsorship. The finances were completely cobbled together. I was disappointed about that. What is going on if arts organisations, climate organisations, large venues and councils all say that they want these kinds of things to happen, but when it comes to the crunch, the budgets aren't there?

It was subsidised by the people who performed. Oi Musica has a policy of never asking musicians to play for free. But people did perform for reduced fees, so it was subsidised by the people who took part. There's something beautiful about that in itself, but I have real questions about the ecosystem that we operate within. Where is the ambition? Where is the budget behind the stated ambitions?

COP26, the arts and climate change; arts processes; and unsupported ambitions

Wallace: On your blog, you wrote about a sense of deflation after COP26.

Oli: Each time these things come around, you have hope that this will be the moment when people put aside their agendas and take seriously the urgent need for radical action. I do still feel disappointed about it, but you have to hope, don't you?

I was also disappointed about the role of the large climate charities. None of them engaged with us. I can see why: we'd all come through a pandemic, and then all of a sudden COP26 is on. But what it felt like to me was that anyone who wanted to engage with COP26 was on their own railroad track, and none of us had time to look sideways and say "You're on the same journey, what can we do together? Let's amplify each other's work." There wasn't time for that cross-working.

It's also a confusing space. There is a bewildering array of charities, NGOs, initiatives, climate-focused organisations of all kinds with similar but varying aims. And within the arts there are organisations and projects that overlap. We just didn't have enough time or resources to research and unpick all of this, in order to form effective partnerships. Again, this is a product both of the pandemic and of limited funding.

I'm thinking about the need for broader working across different sectors. Brilliant work is going on, amazing scientific work, and work on policy - but messages are communicated to the public in only a small number of ways. There is potential for so much more cross-working, engaging artists and creatives to capture imaginations.

Also, within the arts there is a huge amount of experience of bringing people together to do something. There's the end result, such as a performance. But there's so much richness that can be taken from the processes of creating something together. We're forever writing funding applications about how young people, if they play music, they learn to listen and to work as a team and all the rest of it. It sounds like a cliché, but these are hugely important skills way beyond music.

Something we can learn from the arts when looking at the colossal challenges that we face is the way people can work together for a common goal. There has to be more space for grassroots ideas coming outwards from communities, rather than policy and communications coming at people with an expectation that they will change their car or their lifestyle. We need more listening, more collaboration. This is how brilliant ideas and solutions emerge. We must find ways to reach out across and between sectors, because I think there are many more shared goals across arts, climate, health and wellbeing, policy and so on than people might realise.

Any discussion around arts and climate in Scotland is going to have to address the question of who is going to fund the great work? Is it the arts scene here, which doesn't have large-scale commissioning spaces/venues/organisations? The big environmental organisations who are not looking to spend £8,000 on a one-off piece of art/activism? Councils who may or may not have cultural budgets in a time of austerity?



Oli Furness, drums, at Govan performance 'Enough is Enough'.
Photo: Louise Montgomery.

There's so much potential, so many of the things that happened around COP26 were brilliant, we were just one small piece of some really goosebump-inducing arts interventions, and the way that Glasgow came alive with talks and discussions and the energy was fantastic. What we need now are resources to build on that work. Some of the challenges we face can be unlocked through those with access to resources thinking about more creatively about how those resources are invested and who they partner with, and having a bit more ambition.

Would you do something like this again?

Oli: The jury's still out for me on that. It was a huge undertaking. I wouldn't do it again without a bigger team. But that's partly the point. I learned so much as an artist and as a producer. You could invest time doing a formal course of study or you could invest time trying out an idea, and I'm so glad we did it that way.

I still feel a massive sense of gratitude that we were able to try something like this. It was really valuable and it touched a lot of people and it enabled

us to fast-track our learning in different areas. If something like COP26 hadn't come to Scotland, we wouldn't have pulled out the stops in that way.

There's a conversation continuing around 'Let it Grow' about music education opportunities, using it as an example of how you can express a view through music and encouraging new music makers or young people to learn how to express themselves through writing music.

But outdoor and street band music is where our heart is. I can't see us ever writing a song about melting icecaps! But engaging with social issues and climate justice issues – that's something we would consider doing with a pool of artists. The work we go on to do might not be specifically about the climate but more about the things that sit around it, like strong communities and people being able to express a view, learning how to think creatively and slowly building the confidence to take action.

Oi Musica's specialist area is bringing together musicians of mixed abilities, finding common ground between players from different backgrounds, coming together to play music and learning how to be creative, curious and playful. Communities of all kinds need opportunities to gather and connect, and I think the key to addressing many of today's pressing challenges lies in this simple act.

Further information

Oi Musica, at oimusica.co.uk

Oli Furness' blog, [here](#)

Soundhouse Choir: soundhouse.org.uk/choir

Karine Polwart: karinepolwart.com

Song lyrics and musical score: letitgrow.scot/downloads

Online videos of performances: letitgrow.scot/music-for-cop26

The song is licensed under Creative Commons, allowing for adaptation and free performance.

Funding: Creative Scotland; seed-funding from WEALL; Partner funding for 2021 music commissions came from the International Social Enterprise Observatory and Climate Fringe Week; live performance sponsorship from Taylor Hopkinson.



Oi Musica, core band.
Photo: Heather Longwell.

Case study 2: 'Stitches for Survival'

Wallace Heim

Introduction

The pleasures of the hands in making something from string, yarn, fabric, thread; the carefulness and improvisation in giving shape to something new; and the conviviality of doing this with others – these pleasures do not immediately come to mind when considering responses to the climate emergency. The sharing of crafting skills seems ancient rather than pressing. 'Stitches for Survival' showed how any artform has the capacity for expression about climate futures.

The idea was Jane Lewis's, a community song leader and well-being practitioner, and a crafter. She contacted friends among activist and crafting circles to see if there was support for the idea, including Anne-Marte Bergseng, a crafter who also works professionally on climate science communication in Edinburgh.

The 'Stitches' call to crafters and craftivists was to stitch, knit, crochet, make a panel of 60cm x 100cm size expressing something about climate change. The care associated with crafting, and a clear ethos of hope expressed on the website helped draw people in who otherwise might not have participated in an 'activist' way. But there was no direction given for what message was to be expressed, or how it was to be done, apart from the size of the panels. These were to be sent to a central collection point, stitched together into a 1.5-mile-long banner and hung across Glasgow Drying Green, on drying poles for one day during COP26, 6 November. The length represents the 1.5°C target in the Paris Agreement.

The playing out of the idea confounds most artistic production models. There was a steering group. People took responsibility when and as they could. Basic instructions for what to do were given on a website and Facebook page. As the confluence of crafters gained momentum, many formed localised hubs, in the UK and internationally. How it came together depended on the networks of crafters, trust that it would happen, the intervention of volunteers and of supporting organisations like R:evolve Recycle, and the momentum of thousands of crafters, alone and groups, who wanted to 'be there' at COP.

An organising group of crafters called out online to networks and individual crafters inviting them to stitch a panel expressing a response or demand to COP26 as a mass-craftivism action. The panels were assembled on Glasgow Drying Green during COP26 on 6 November 2021 and subsequently are being re-purposed as blankets for various charities. stitchesforsurvival.earth/

- Jane Lewis, community song leader, well-being practitioner and crafter
- Anne-Marte Bergseng, Knowledge Exchange Manager, ClimateXChange
- and a steering group of volunteers

The panels are being re-purposed into blankets and given away, many going to refugee, homeless and health charities. The National Museum of Scotland is including panels in their permanent collection. Panels have been exhibited at York Minster; St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh; South Mead Hospital, Bristol; and other locations.

I spoke with Jane Lewis and Anne-Marte Bergseng together.



Photo: courtesy of 'Stitches for Survival'.

Interview

Hope, anarchy and letting it happen

Jane: The idea was for something we could each do in our own homes and then do something public with it. We could contribute something to this urgent climate meeting within the confines of wherever we might be in terms of COVID-19.

Anne-Marte: We are crafters. We are passionate about climate change and environmental change. Here was an idea that brought those together. Let's see what we can make of it and it will be what it will be. Take it and run. Whoever comes are the right people. We just made it up with whoever was there and whatever they wanted to do.

Wallace: Your personal contacts and the website gave people a strong steer towards positive responses, towards care for the Earth, for each other and for the future. Jane quotes Joanna Macy's thoughts on 'Active Hope', and Rebecca Solnit and Arundhati Roy. Did that draw people in? Did that influence what people made?

Anne-Marte: There is something about the group that came together to organise this. We are not sitting around. Yes, there's real anxiety about the climate and environmental changes we're seeing. But there is the opportunity for the world to change. That is deep within us as people, and that inevitably comes through in whatever we're saying, whatever text we're writing or proposals we're making.

We never talked about this, but the whole idea was 'let's be there', as people or as crafted panels. Let's be there in Glasgow and tell these negotiators, 'You can take radical action and we support that.'

It comes from a place of not positivity, because that is wrong to say in the context of climate change, but it comes from a place of 'there is still time'. It is running out fast, but we can do something. For all of us, all of these people, thousands of people that took part, this is us giving support.

There were panels that showed the impacts of climate change, or the impact of environmental destruction. But there was a lot of 'this is what you can do'. People were looking for opportunities to do things, to meet up, to talk about climate change, to get out there, to inspire. There was a lot of extremely positive energy.

Jane: It was about demonstrating an act of love. If we can connect with the Earth in that deep way, then we're motivated to do something. It was about helping people to tap into that and to produce whatever they can on whatever level they're working at. We had some professional crafters and we had some complete beginners. People's range of responses, from the very political to the very artistic - there were so many different voices all coming together.

We got the bare bones up online incredibly quickly. I was concerned about getting a clear outline of what we were asking people to do, and to not be fixated on the one day in Glasgow. This is a process and we really want it to ripple out and be the focus for many conversations and for awareness-raising.

What I found most challenging was that we tapped into a lot of crafters who hadn't been very politically active before. I thought we would tap into activists who were creative - and we did. But we had quite a lot of Women's Institute groups and slightly older women. They wanted very precise instructions as to exactly how we were going to do this, exactly what they needed to do, exactly how we were going to join the panels together. There was a lot of technical talk.

People did begin to get that this is a big whole, and not about each individual panel. But we had to keep encouraging people to take responsibility. There is no prescribed formula here. This isn't a competition. It's not an art show. It's up to you to do what you want; to get together with people in your area; to organise your own events. I think I was expecting a more autonomous activist model where people would take it and run with it.

Anne-Marte: People were not necessarily used to that kind of anarchy, in the positive form of the word. How many parameters, how many rules, who's in charge? And there may not be anybody in charge. If you see something needing doing, then go and do it. Please don't ask us to do any more than we're already doing, because we are full-time working people.

Jane: Doing something as part of a bigger whole was integral to it. When we first set up the Facebook group, we had hundreds of people joining each day. It was overwhelming - how are we going to manage this? It was about keeping heart, keeping strength. We dropped a pebble in and the ripples had just gone mad, far more than we could have ever expected.

Anne-Marte: We had a lot of people who are not crafters and who probably didn't do a single stitch but were absolutely integral to the project.

Jane: We were quite far down the line before we had a final plan for what we were going to do in Glasgow. I was grateful when a fabulous group emerged to look at the logistics and work that out. When R:evolve Recycle came on board, that was amazing.

It was very much an act of faith all along that somehow we will work this out between us, and we did. There was something lovely about just trusting that. In a way, it mirrors climate change. We're in an absolute mess but we need to keep believing that together we will work it out, we will find a way through it, if we keep at it, if we keep communicating, if we keep bringing our whole selves to it and our best selves.



Photos: courtesy of 'Stitches for Survival'.

Wallace: Those qualities of making it up as you go along, knowing what it's supposed to be, and then doing something different - those qualities which gets subsumed into something called 'crafts' - are very political and very artistic.

Anne-Marte: It is amazing what people can make. This was just a pile of cut-off jeans, or this was just a ball of wool, and wow! Now it is a political statement.

Jane: When you're making something, you don't know exactly how it's going to be when you start and it evolves and you have to trust that process and sit with that uncertainty and trust that it will emerge. What we were seeking was to move beyond that logical 'This is what we need to do about climate change', and actually approach it from a creative angle that would help people both see how they could get involved in a different way but also help people to connect with it in a heart-felt way.

Anne-Marte: Quite a few of us, myself included, were professionally working on COP.

For me this project and some of the fringe stuff was an opportunity to get some balance. I work on climate change science and on providing evidence for the government processes. I was organising events at COP, both in the Blue and Green Zones.

One of the aims for me in presenting evidence and climate science to policy makers is for something different to happen. We have to do something different because we are in the mess that we're in because we keep on doing the same things again and again and again. We have to shake it up. From an intellectual perspective you can say science isn't shaking it up; it's not stirring whatever emotions it is that we need to stir.

For a lot of the people involved in 'Stitches for Survival', they may not have detailed knowledge of the science on climate change but they were not unaware. They came to this project knowing that we're in a climate emergency and knowing what's happening. But it stirred something different in us. It's about finding those switches. How do we do things differently? What's going to change me so that I am more environmentally friendly tomorrow?

For me, that's not an either/or. It's not - either I do craftivism or I go to work and translate climate change science. I need to do both. Tackling climate change isn't an either/or. It's everybody to the pumps, and using all of what we have. So, I suppose that's why for me it was really great to not just have COP as a work thing but also have this other side of it that felt much more 'Let's go. Let's do it.'

You can ask what has happened as a result of 'Stitches for Survival'. I would say a lot of people have thought about climate change a lot more than they would have done otherwise. They've increased their own level of knowledge about it. There is also that spirit of 'Stitches', that we each have to do what we can.

It felt for me, personally, like a lovely balance in terms of the whole event, a balance to what happens in the negotiation rooms.

Aims for divestment, economics and earth law

Wallace: You have some clear aims on your website - Keep fossil fuels in the ground/fossil-free divestment; establish regenerative and distributive economies/Doughnut economics; and legal protection for the earth and oceans/Earth Law. Did these ideas percolate through the conversations and make their way into the crafting?

Anne-Marte: Those three aims were there right from the start, but we weren't pushing them. People were free to take part as they felt. We didn't want people to have to sign up to these aims, or to be excluded by them.

It's important for me to take it beyond the level of 'don't use single use plastic' or 'recycle your cardboard', to take it to level that is more meaningful and relates more to those international negotiations. Because we need a transformation of the economic system. We can't recycle our way out of this.

But equally, I don't want to demand that level of commitment or understanding. People need to have an opportunity to come into this and discuss and learn and reflect. The process of crafting gives time and space for that kind of reflection. So that in many ways is much more valuable than whether they agreed to those three aims at the start.

Jane: I don't think anybody actively disagreed with them. But they weren't as much of a focus as we'd maybe hoped they would be. It was crucial that they were there. It felt important to have something concrete to hang onto.

Funding and support

Wallace: Did you have any funding for this?

Jane: No

We got a £500 donation from someone in my local Quaker meeting when one of their COP projects couldn't be done. We spent £20 on pegs, and the rest on pop-up banners that would be our portable exhibition.

The aim really early on was to keep it as organisationally light as possible, as simple as possible. We don't have a bank account. We don't have a structure. If we don't need money, we don't need money.

Anne-Marte: If we were to apply for funding, what were we applying for funding for? Because we didn't know. It wasn't the kind of thing where we had a plan and we could have put that plan to any kind of funding body. It just didn't exist.



Photo: courtesy of 'Stitches for Survival'.



Photo: courtesy of 'Stitches for Survival'.

What did you learn? What suggestions do you have for anyone else wanting to do something similar?

Anne-Marte: Just do it.

Jane: There are vast numbers of crafters out there who are really keen to get involved, wanting to do something, people who wouldn't go to a march or a demonstration, but they can do it through their crafting. Tap into that, be creative and imaginative. You don't have to know where you're going with it before you put it out there. If you've got a group and a community around you, trust that you can work it out together.

Anne-Marte: It shows how much people care. People really wanted to be at COP.

Jane: It was a crazy idea – outdoors in Glasgow, in November. The power of colour and creativity, it was so moving just seeing all the effort and care that had gone into it.

Anne-Marte: Keeping that momentum going afterwards is important, giving it a longer lasting legacy, although it's been hard at times to keep those promises that the panels are not being wasted. We've all been tired, but it's part of the whole ethos. It didn't go away. We didn't solve climate change on that day in November in Glasgow, so we're just going to keep on going. That's just how it is.

Further information

Project partner: R:evolve Recycle, an intergenerational project to reduce clothing consumption and decrease landfill waste by offering a range of services based on the stories, skills and experiences of older people which prolong the life of clothes. www.revolve-recycle.co.uk

Regional co-ordinating groups include those in:

- Scotland: Dumfries and Galloway; Cambuslang, South Lanarkshire; East Renfrewshire; Edinburgh; Hamilton; Scottish Borders; Edinburgh; Stirling; Falkirk and Clackmannanshire; Troon, Ayrshire
- Northern Ireland
- England: Bristol, Cambridge, Coventry, Ipswich, Kirklees, Leeds, South Yorkshire, Northumberland, St. Ives Cambridgeshire, North Devon
- South Africa: Hex River Valley
- Canada: Toronto

Panels continue to be stitched into blankets and distributed across the UK and globally. They have been distributed to:

- Refugee and homeless charities including: Ukrainian refugees; Aid Box Community, Bristol; Edinburgh Direct Aid; Lebanon Refugee Camp in Aarsal; Isle of Lewis Resettled refugees and local families with children via Linda Norgrove Foundation; Lochaber Supports Refugees for Bosnia; Young Unaccompanied Refugee and Asylum seekers in Glasgow; 'The Welcoming' Edinburgh refugee families; Kindness Homeless Street Team Glasgow; Newcastle Helping Street Friends
- In health and other settings including: Woman's Aid East and Mid Lothian; Glasgow Hospital's Neonatal Unit; RSPB Curlew Life Project; Cyrenians Edinburgh



Photo: courtesy of 'Stitches for Survival'.

Category 2: Taking COP26 elsewhere

Lewis Coenen-Rowe and Wallace Heim

Another significant approach was in many ways the opposite of the practices described above. These projects used the increased public awareness associated with COP26 but did not primarily seek to influence the negotiations themselves or bring artistic work to the location. Instead, the focus of these projects was on creating opportunities for participation away from the official sites. This might be focused on engaging residents based in different areas of Glasgow who were at risk of feeling cut off from the COP26 negotiations that had arrived in their home city. It might be about using the arts to provide routes to participation in other parts of Scotland that are remote from Glasgow. It might also be about seeking to engage sectors or audiences, such as people who face barriers to participation in climate action or creative industries who are particularly well placed to make a difference.

Commentators have frequently pointed towards the ‘circus-comes-to-town’ effect around COPs where a huge amount of activity comes to one location for a limited period before leaving again. There are good reasons for this tendency given that the negotiations provide a unique opportunity with a high concentration of influential decision-makers present. However, it can mean that opportunities are missed to involve broader audiences with most people in the host nation lacking opportunities to engage unless they come to the host city. The arts can help reach a wider range of locations and demographics either through taking advantage of existing arts venues around the country or through long-term projects where artists work closely with residents.

Again, the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic made these kinds of approaches especially vital. Many people were unable to travel or uncomfortable with participating in large scale events in cities making it extra important to provide ways for people to participate from home. A number of these projects used online methods to allow participation from anywhere or deliberately focused on smaller gatherings that facilitated meaningful conversation as well as presenting a reduced risk of infection.

It is also worth noting the differing ideological bases for projects in these categories. Some of them were focused on taking key message and outcomes from COP26 and communicating them effectively to local audiences. Others had ideological disagreements with the COP26 process or felt that the results of the conference were likely to be inadequate, leading them to develop their own independent alternatives. Others had a more neutral stance towards COP26 and focused on issues that were not emphasised by the COP and which they wanted to come through more strongly.



Montage image from the Climate Beacons project.
Photos: British Geological Survey, Creative Carbon Scotland, Juliana Capes, Lorna Dawson, Emma Henderson, Lan Thide, Regina Mosch, National Mining Museum Scotland, Timespan.

Climate Beacons

This project from Creative Carbon Scotland created seven ‘Climate Beacons’ made up of partnerships between cultural organisations – such as arts centres, museums and theatres – and climate organisations – such as research bodies, community groups and charities – working together to run creative and locally relevant public engagement. The Beacons were in Argyll, Caithness and East Sutherland, Fife, Inverclyde, Midlothian, the Outer Hebrides and Tayside and launched in June 2021, running for one year.

Climate of Hope

This extensive programme of climate focused performances and events during the lead-up to COP26 was organised by Eden Court in Inverness. The programme included a mixture of in-person events as well as an online programme and involved collaborations with local environmental organisations.

The Dear Green Bothy

This programme was run by University of Glasgow’s College of Arts during the lead-up to and throughout COP26. It included a mixture of performances, exhibitions and talks, the majority of which took place online; creative commissions from A+E Collective, Sound Thought and others; and support for new collaborative research projects.

Dear Green Place

This programme of activity organised at Platform arts centre in Easterhouse, Glasgow included performances and workshops as well as visits to local schools, nurseries, clubs and groups. Despite being in Glasgow, Easterhouse is eight miles from the COP26 site and at some distance from many of the events planned around the conference. The project sought to engage this local audience that nevertheless felt cut off from the official event.

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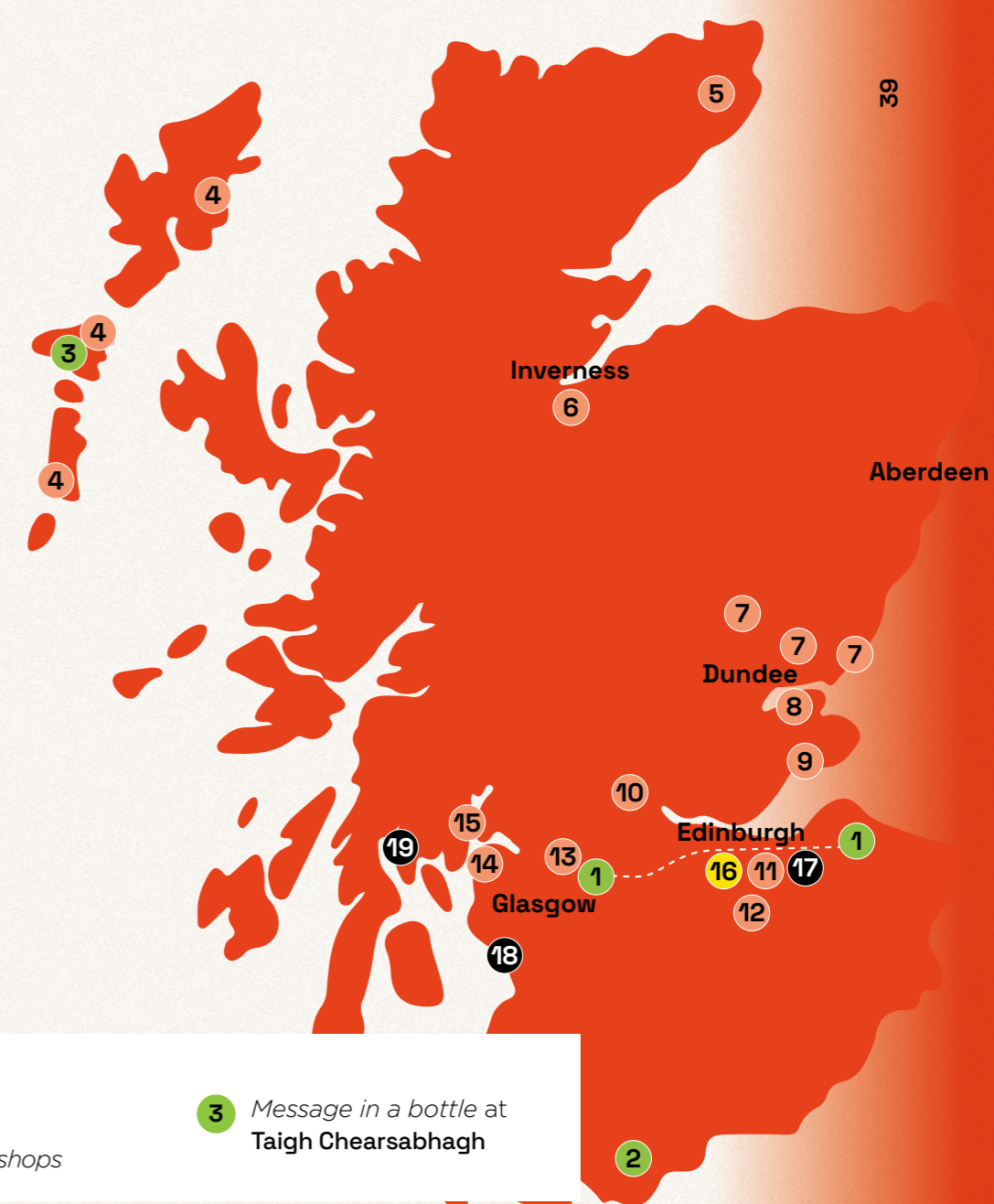
Design for Planet Festival	This two-day event organised in Dundee during COP26 by the Design Council included a mixture of talks and workshops. It was especially aimed at the UK's architecture and design professionals, aiming to empower people working in this key sector to be able to do more to address climate change.
Govan Free State	This project from the Gal Gael Trust involved a playful 'declaration of independence' for the neighbourhood of Govan, situated just over the river Clyde from the COP venue. At an opening event held on the 1st of November, attendees collectively signed a declaration and adopted a Govan passport. The declaration provided the opportunity to interrogate the decision-making process behind environmental policy and to explore what a state that put human and planetary wellbeing first should look like.
Positive Imaginings	Rowanbank Environmental Arts and Education worked with primary school children in Craigmillar, Edinburgh. They created a 'cycling circus' and ran workshops in the local woodland as a means of teaching the children about climate change and provide opportunities for them to share their perspectives. Contributions from the children were recorded and turned into a soundscape that was widely distributed.
Scene Stirling Climate Change COP26 Commissions	Scene Stirling commissioned five artists to work together on a Stirling-based project that would inspire climate action as a response to COP26. The artists received support and mentorship and worked across the COP26 period to share their work in 2022 through events and an online 'gallery'.
What the COP?	This project from Take One Action film festival supported community groups around Scotland to hold screenings of films about climate change, providing licenses for a curated set of films as well as logistical and promotion support.

Wildcard: Walking Forest

This artistic project is inspired by the tactics used by the suffragettes and applies these to activism focused on defending the natural world and especially trees. As part of the project, women brought a tree that had been felled as part of construction work on the HS2 high speed railway to Glasgow and carried it in a procession around the streets from dawn until dusk, stopping at various key locations and sharing their messages.

Map of Scotland showing locations of arts and cultural activities and venues for COP26.

Arts installations and events in italics
Organisations in bold



Taking it to COP

- 1 *A&E Pilgrimage Route*
- 2 *LAND flag-making workshops*
- 3 *Message in a bottle at Taigh Chearsabhagh*

Taking COP elsewhere

- 4 **Outer Hebrides Climate Beacon (Làn Thide)** at **An Lanntair, Taigh Chearsabhagh, Ceòlas, Western Isle Libraries**
- 5 **Caithness and East Sutherland Climate Beacon** and *The Fifth Giant* at **Lyth Arts Centre**
- 6 *Climate of Hope* at **Eden Court**
- 7 **Tayside Climate Beacon** at **Dundee Rep, V&A Dundee, Dundee Transport Museum, Catearan Ecomuseum, Angus Alive** and more
- 8 **Design for Planet Festival** at **V&A Dundee**
- 9 **Fife Climate Beacon**
- 10 **Scene Stirling Climate Change COP26 Commissions**
- 11 *Positive Imaginings* by **Rowanbank**
- 12 **Midlothian Climate Beacon** at **National Mining Museum Scotland**
- 13 *Dear Green Place* at **Platform**
- 14 **Inverclyde Climate Beacon** at **Beacon Arts Centre, Rig Arts, Inverclyde Libraries** and more
- 15 **Argyll Climate Beacon** at **Cove Park**

Public Spaces at COP

- 16 **The SpACE**

Features mentioned elsewhere

- 17 **Dynamic Earth**
- 18 **Scottish Maritime Museum**
- 19 *The Argyll Ark*

Case study 3: 'The Fifth Giant (or What Would You Do?)'

Wallace Heim

Introduction

A COP is a meeting, an event within continuous work dispersed among disciplines, institutions, countries and political systems, one that takes over and, for a few weeks, names a city as connected with decisions on climate futures. People gravitate to that place, but the influence of a COP spreads more widely. I wanted to ask how arts projects in Scotland and a long way from Glasgow responded to COP26.

Caithness is 6 hours north from Glasgow by road, ecologically and economically distinct from the Central Belt, the more populated areas between Glasgow and Edinburgh. Its cultural associations, too, extend beyond the Scottish urban south. How would climate issues be addressed in that rural locale, issues which can become abstracted, can flatten lived experience and simplify ideas. How would artists there respond?

Lyth Arts Centre, with the cultural organisation Timespan and the Environmental Research Institute, initiated the project 'The Land for Those That Work It'. The project will extend to March 2023, but its formal start was with a residency by The Bare Project during COP26. Most of this case study is about that residency project: 'The Fifth Giant (or What Would You Do?)'.

The context set by the ideas informing 'The Land for Those That Work It' signal to me a significant way of connecting the global complexities of a changing climate with a sensitivity to and an interrogation of local lived experience. The project looks at land and environment justice, at developmental policies for the region and at climate colonialism and the relation of the region to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Many of those issues were discussed and given artistic shape in Glasgow; they are part of the immediate currencies of ideas that are circulating widely. But they can be seen as conditions happening somewhere else, or seen only in terms of the responsibilities of the European colonisers and economies with the need for reparations as being towards another place, towards other peoples. The ideas can have a particular direction of travel. What 'The Land for Those That Work It' may do is to begin on the land of Caithness, and ask those questions in local, distinct and difficult ways.

Residency project by The Bare Project at Lyth Arts Centre, Lyth, Caithness, Scotland, 30 October-12 November 2021, with post-residency work to end of 2021. thebareproject.co.uk

- Malaika Cunningham, Director, The Bare Project

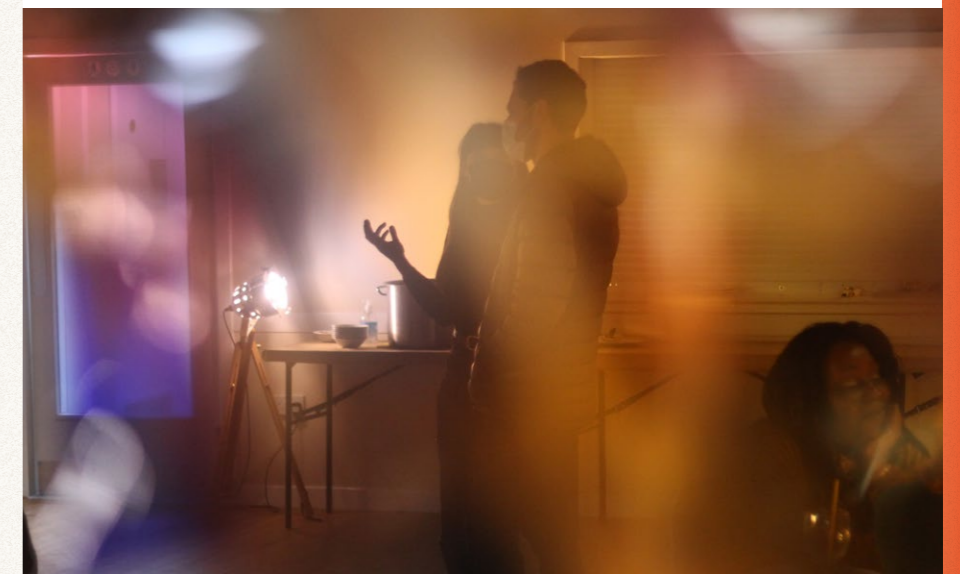
Part of the project 'The Land for Those That Work It', September 2021 to March 2023. lytharts.org.uk/climate-beacons

- Lyth Arts Centre, Charlotte Mountford, Director
- Timespan
- University of the Highlands and Islands Environmental Research Institute

The artistic and collaborative processes of 'The Fifth Giant (or What Would You Do?)' align with socially and ecologically engaged practices more than the other case studies. It works in the relationships established between people and with lands and environments. The methods are performed, in the moment, informed by strong ethical sensibilities as to how to work with other artists and members of a public, and informed by political directions, although these may not be explicit. It is responsive to the conversations that are made possible. It relies on the tacit skills of the artist to make those relationships, however transitory, through which the work of art is made by someone else and may take its own course. The material evidence of the projects and some of the encounters can be recorded, but it is difficult to capture how it happened.

'The Fifth Giant (or What Would You Do?)' is part of The Bare Project's long-term work 'The Peoples Palace of Possibility', residencies with different communities, exploring different themes and visions of the future, each creating a 'room' in the Palace. The Bare Project is based in South Yorkshire.

I spoke separately with Charlotte Mountford, Director of Lyth Arts Centre, about the over-arching project 'The Land for Those That Work It', and with Malaika Cunningham, Director of The Bare Project, about 'The Fifth Giant (or What Would You Do?)'.



Stills from 'The Fifth Giant (or What Would You Do?)'.
Photo: Regina Mosch.

Interview

'The Land for Those That Work It' and the dis-connections with COP26

Charlotte: I had been in conversation with Timespan for a few years about our feelings of being jaded and disenfranchised and disconnected from what we felt were very urban-centric climate conversations happening in Scotland. Rural communities were left out of environmental policies and development. This was felt by us personally, by our organisations, but also by the communities that we serve and live in.

Simultaneously, I'd been in conversation with Malaika and The Bare Project about their work. Then the COP26 opportunity came up. Initially we met with other Highland organisations about applying for funding as a Highland-wide collective in early 2021. But I felt that Caithness and Sutherland have unique communities that have different feelings and approaches to the climate crisis and to what climate action looks like for them. That meeting was definitely a catalyst, even though we didn't stay part of the Highland group. COP26 felt like a once in an organisational lifetime opportunity that would allow us to explore that difference.

'The Land for Those That Work It' presents us with questions from two sides: from this urban-centric view of climate action that we wanted to challenge; and equally, from a disconnect in our local communities with climate action. How can we draw the parallels between how land ownership is connected to climate change, and how climate colonialism and the impacts of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade affect us today? What would reparations look like for Highland communities? The project is trying to see how these things are all interconnected and to have a more intersectional view of climate action and what that might look like.

We've hit roadblocks around land ownership because it is complicated and it means different things to different people. It's challenging to the new green lairds (landowners) who are buying up estates attempting to offset or greenwash their carbon footprint - which isn't the answer. And rewilding is contentious here, if people are thinking about places they imagine to be de-peopled. We've had five years of slow, deep community work, so we can maybe start asking some of these questions like you would with a grumpy uncle. You wouldn't just go straight in; you'd butter them up a bit first.

'The Fifth Giant...' felt a like a gentle protest to COP26. It felt opposite to what was happening in Glasgow. It felt like what we were doing over the two-week period was this collaborative, meaningful, on-the-ground engagement. It felt like that's what COP26 should have been across Scotland instead of jam-packed into the city.



'The Fifth Giant...'.
Workshop and meal.
Photo: Regina Mosch

Wallace: Lyth Arts Centre has a clear idea of the issues underpinning 'The Land for Those That Work It', but 'The Fifth Giant...' doesn't directly talk about those issues. It starts from another place.

Charlotte: Totally. We had no expectation from The Bare Project about what they would come out with, which is why you get such brilliant results because you're not breathing down their necks with an idea.

A lot of their work is about theatre for change. What does that look like? And their utopian vision is helpful in climate crisis thinking. We were having a conversation here today in the office about feeling hopeless. The Bare Project bring a utopian vision and that's good in the context of these conversations.

Wallace: Over the last thirty years, there has been considerable work on of the values and processes in ecological and social practice projects. That's starting to influence the structure of arts organisations themselves. Is this something you're considering?

Charlotte: Yes, it's definitely a move we've been making over the last two years. It sped up through the pandemic because we couldn't do our usual 'capitalist' models of working, like selling tickets. So our transactions were in totally different, social terms. We're a diverse team of crofters and people who fish and have sheep, and who farm. It feels very connected.

'The Fifth Giant (or What Would You Do?)'

Wallace: How did the idea of Giants come about?

Malaika: When we were setting up the project, we thought that we were going to be talking about Scots and Gaelic languages and how that impacted people's relationship with land. But language wasn't something people wanted to talk about. We were also engaging with the folklores of the place, with Celtic cultures. The Giants folklore felt most relevant to questions of human relationships with land because Giants shape the land. Then the questions became "Who would the Giant of today be in Caithness? Who are these more-than-mortal figures who shape the landscapes around us?".

We had two weeks to put something together. We didn't 100% know what the output was going to be. It was fortuitous to find a hook for the piece so quickly. That was a combination of excitement from the local practitioners we were working with and of the idea fitting the political materials that we were reading, a mix of folklore and political texts. Those included George Gunn's *The Province of the Cat: A Journey to the Radical Heart of the Far North* and *A Scots Dictionary of Nature*, by Amanda Thomson.

Each of the four representations are Giants that emerged from our conversations and readings. The names are completely imagined, made up by the writer Joseph Houlders, a member of The Bare Project.

'The Fifth Giant...' came out of conversations about how do we become a Giant? How do we as a group of mortals have an impact on the landscapes around us?

That's why it's 'The Fifth Giant (or What Would You Do?)' because it is about the question of how citizens who are not big energy companies or hereditary peers can have a relationship with the landscape that is impactful. How can you make changes? That's what we wanted to emphasise with the project.

The names of the Four Giants and what they symbolise are:

Grinshunk – big estates, absent landlords, the military

Hahm – the energy companies, wind turbines, Dounreay

Losbyrner – land projects, clearances and rewilding, justice, tourism

Varnaclay – the Giant's Giant who encompasses the wind, the rain, the sea, the salt, and the soil; storm and truth

Maybe the only way that mere mortals can be Giants is through connections between each other and solidarity building. Two weeks isn't enough time to make a change. What we can do, what we can offer, is to create interesting spaces for people to come together, to build relationships and to have conversations about things that they might not have conversations about outside of those contexts. These then may lead to connections to take forward in their own lives. Maybe the semblance of a Fifth Giant that you leave behind is building relationships between people in the places.

The two weeks culminated in a dinner with a mix of people who we'd worked with

and others. Over the course of the meal, we asked people to use the Giants that we'd introduced to write stories about how the landscapes around them were formed. Those were the hand-written stories collected over the night hanging up that you see in the film. People were explaining the landscapes around them using these fictional characters as a way of getting to know them as a framework for thinking about the politics of land.

The project was supported by Creative Carbon Scotland and we had money from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) to make the film. We did a discussion event for the ESRC that mirrored what we did in the meal. Because people were from all over the country, it became a question of who are the Giants in your landscapes? That was a useful way to start a conversation about land justice.

Wallace: Was it important that you came from outside Caithness?

Malaika: If you're coming from outside, people can be open because you're not part of their context. People were starting from scratch to explain their relationships with Caithness. You get details that maybe you wouldn't get if you were already embedded in the place as a practitioner.

We, too, were seeing things fresh, without our own judgements and lenses. We came with our own misconceptions and biases. Caithness is absolutely covered in wind turbines, and from an external perspective, that could be seen as a good thing. We need wind energy; renewables are good. We got fresh perspectives on the ways that these are more complicated locally. The resistances people have are complex and nuanced.

Wallace: Was there an undercurrent about COP26?

Malaika: We stopped off in Glasgow on our way up, and within a few days of being in Caithness, it didn't feel relevant anymore. The Central Belt of

Scotland feels further away than other places in the world. People were unaware of COP26. Some of the people we were working with has started a community woodland, and they had only vaguely heard of COP26. The crofters didn't engage with it at all. The young people were reading the news and knew more about it. It felt like it might have been something that was happening in another country. The lukewarm commitments that were made reinforced the sense that COP is a publicity affair rather than something particularly meaningful.

Wallace: Was climate change explicit in your conversations?

Malaika: We don't explicitly say 'climate change' or 'environment' in our work. It can be alienating for some people. The People's Palace of Possibility is about future building. There's not a conversation that you can have about the future that is not about climate change. That's how we bring it in. 'Food' and 'land' are the key terms we talk about.

'Climate change' and 'environment' can be pigeon-holing terms as well. They are big problems. People don't really feel qualified to say how we're going to fix this problem, but they might have lots to say. A crofter in Caithness is going to have lots to say about how land should be managed and what they think about the land around them, because that's something that they know about and care about and have expertise in. That's why we start with more specific things that relate to people's lives with something they can hold onto.

Charlotte: We have to remember we're in agricultural and fishing communities and we need to have a sensitivity to that. I feel like there's a wall that goes straight up as soon as you mention 'climate' – just that word. A lot of this is cultural heritage. If you go in with a celebratory and positive tone that then seeks to ask questions, that seems to work.

Variations of collaborative processes

Wallace: What are your methods for collaboration? What makes for a good collaboration?

Charlotte: I've thought about this a lot as to our role as a producing organisation and my personal role as the curator, commissioner. It needs to be almost a collaborator-facilitator. It's been helpful for us as an organisation to have a self-reflective practice around creating equitable systems of collaboration. We tend to operate with a process of co-design and social practice engagement. With The Bare Project and our communities here, it was very loose and based on a series of invitations. That's how most of our collaborations go. We don't have outputs set out; it's very much 'let's see what happens.' Often strange, wonderful things happen.

Malaika: For us, it comes down to thinking carefully about exchange. What are both parties getting from this? Sometimes that's monetary, like the artists we worked with in the Highlands were paid to be there.

Sometimes it's about an exchange of ideas. For example, working with Magnus Davidson from the Environmental Research Institute. He was interested in arts-based methods and how we were working with the same ideas as he was, but in a different way. When we went along to the Dunnet

Community Woodland, we were helping to clear a path and build a brush wall. We were getting their stories that we needed for our work, but we were also there as labourers for them.

The meal at the end was a gift back to the community, a thank you. That spirit of exchange is crucial to collaboration, so that it doesn't feel extractive. If we are there talking about extraction, we don't want to replicate that.

Wallace: You both have academic experience and collaborate with academics and scientists. Again, what makes for a good collaboration?

Charlotte: We love working with academics, particularly around climate issues. We're lucky to have the Environmental Research Institute on our doorstep. The ERI do a lot of fieldwork, and they're not averse to us saying "can we come with you into the bog?". We get asked by academics for help in making their research more accessible, for it to be creatively interpreted, whether that's into a play or some work with young people, or a workshop.

The only time we find it difficult is when it becomes institutionalised, when we're entering into formal partnerships. That has to get signed off by the wider institution and feels opposite to the way we're working. It can be a shock to the system, or stall the collaboration because it's so outside the atmosphere that we're creating.

Malaika: Because I'm a practice-based researcher, I can justify some of the practice that we're doing as research, as a method, rather than an output. So, the meal is both an output and a method, like a data gathering, a refinement, learning by doing.

In the most basic terms, for a lot of our collaborations with academic institutions, we're the group that they're giving money to, to do the public engagement that they don't know how to do and actually aren't very interested in doing. For them, it can sometimes be about numbers, rather than the qualitative experience that those people are having. It's tricky how you play with different agendas. You do have to speak both languages, which is where being an artist and also having done a PhD comes in useful. I did a PhD in social science, so I can speak that language, even if that doesn't fully articulate the practice. Because the practice that you're doing doesn't always fit in the language that they have for the work. The language of our work in social science contexts is 'public engagement'. With them, I would talk about the arts in those terms. But I would use different language within the arts sector, or with community partners.

Changing the funding structures

Wallace: What changes in the funding structures would benefit your work?

Charlotte: We're a project-funded organisation. We don't have any regular funding. It is always difficult to manage projects like 'The Land for Those That Work It', that span years. These projects don't end. You might have a day when the funding runs out, or the day when the project plan comes to an end, but in reality, they never end. It's cyclical and it passes on. But it's really hard to put that into a funding application or into a spreadsheet or into a measurable output.

If funders were more open to long-term funding – as much as they can allow because they also don't get long-term guarantees either whether that's from the UK government or Scottish government – but as far as they can allow for this longevity, that would be brilliant.

In terms of our reporting, some funders value a qualitative reporting and case studies. That makes for a much better reporting, especially for us in a community like Caithness where the numbers of members of the public reached might not be so big. We're now having to report on our carbon emissions. Again, having an understanding of our unique context where things like public transport isn't very good, would help.

And come and see us. So many of our funders are based in the Central Belt. I wish, as part of our funding agreement, all of them would have to come and see us. I wish that could be part of their responsibilities as a funder.

Malaika: There would be two main changes I would love to see. One is to take the pressure off numbers and put the pressure onto how you're engaging. Funders application forms and competitive structures are outputs- and numbers-driven. If we're talking about evaluation with socially engaged practice, taking the emphasis from quantitative and putting it further into qualitative analysis.

The second is timescales. Funders like quick projects. Two weeks is not enough time to do anything, and our work suffers from that. If we're going to talk about socially engaged practice, it has to be long-term working. It would be good to see funding schemes that are about being embedded in a project over a number of years, and acknowledging the costs of that.

We felt okay with working with Lyth Arts Centre because they are embedded and we were a flash in the pan of a bigger project. It was part of something that was already in motion and continues to be in motion. That's rare.

Also, there's very little space within funding structures to be honest about when things don't work, and how that can be positive. You learn a lot from failure. I've learned more from projects that haven't worked than from projects that have. It would be better for the sector if we could be honest but in such a competitive environment, we can't be.

Another aspect is that, for example, you're on a project for a month and funders will say "Solve food insecurity in Doncaster". One, we're not social workers, and two, a month isn't enough time. We're often trying to shoehorn our work into funding that is about alleviating social ills, or into funding streams that emphasise the social impact of the arts in a way that can leave no room for the art.

It's dispiriting to be in that space. I don't know what the answer to that is, other than make sure there's enough funding for the arts so that we don't have to be asking the National Health Service for money. A lot is being asked of us at this time, particularly in terms of trying to rebuild the social fabric that's been hammered by the Conservative government, but we shouldn't be the ones in society to be solving problems that are better addressed by other professionals.

What was learned, what is ahead

Charlotte: What we got from 'The Fifth Giant...' is how powerful community can be. What we are seeing through the impact of austerity, and the impact of lockdowns, is a disenfranchised community, a tired, hungry community. That makes you less able to engage with global issues. But where our strength lies is in community, and that's what Caithness and Sutherland have really proved over the last few years.



'The Fifth Giant...'.
Workshop and meal.
Photo: Regina Mosch.

Moving forward for us has definitely meant engaging with more and different partners. We're engaged more with climate hubs and local community climate initiatives. Getting out more, being more visible, connecting arts-culture-science research is becoming more a part of our make-up as an arts organisation.

There will be big economic changes here - the decommissioning of Dounreay Nuclear Site, the push for renewables, the Space Hub - and we have to engage more in the economic arguments, which can feel like it's not what we want to do. But if we can make the case for meaningful employment, and that might be in the arts and culture and heritage sectors, we might assist with a just transition. We'll have to learn that language.

What suggestions would you have for other organisations and artists?

Charlotte: We're doing a lot of defining. We've found it useful to unpick the terms that we throw around too much and ask "What does that mean?". And making that visible, whether that's on the website or in a letter of agreement between one another, making that understanding and expectation visible. It's like setting out your methodology as a collective: this is what we're going to do and how we're going to do it. I find that really useful, and it helps you say "no". It helps with capacity. So if that's about terms we're using or if we're saying "let's have a collaboration", define that. And be prepared for it to change completely.

Malaika: When you have a short timescale, don't put too much pressure on yourself to be looking at the output. And take the pressure off trying to create a show with high production value.

If you're a company coming in from somewhere else, try and work with local artists. Try and create paid opportunities for local artists within your residencies because I think it adds depth, and also contributes to legacy building.

Come with questions. Come with questions rather than an idea of what it is you want to make. If you're working with people, allow your ideas to be shaped by what they say and what they want.

Further information

[Film](#) created by Regina Mosch

[Blog post](#) about the project written by Malaika Cunningham

Members of The Bare Project on residency: Malaika Cunningham, Lee Affen, Bethany Well, Linda Bloomfield, Joseph Houlders

Collaborators in Caithness include:

- Sinéad Hargan, artist;
- Fadzai Mwakutuya, artist;
- George Gunn, writer: 'The Province of the Cat: A Journey to the Radical Heart of the Far North';
- Magnus Davidson, Research Associate: Environment, Economy, and Society. Environmental Research Institute, University of the Highlands and Islands;
- Philomena De Lima, Director of the Centre of Remote and Rural Studies, Centre for Living Sustainably, University of the Highlands and Islands;
- and members of the public.

Funding: 'The Land for Those That Work It' is a Creative Carbon Scotland Climate Beacons project, funded by the Scottish Government, Creative Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland.

Wildcard: Ocean ARTic

This project from the Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland (MASTS) paired together marine scientists and artists to produce new creative work about the effects of warming in the Arctic. During a residency, artists Eve Mosher and Michael Begg discussed scientists' research with them and developed ideas for artistic ways to develop public understanding of this research. From this Begg produced a major new musical work that was performed live and recorded while Mosher developed an online portal as a means of sharing stories and learning about marine science.

Category 3: Public spaces at COP26

Lewis Coenen-Rowe and Wallace Heim

The locations where events and activities took place around COP26 were immensely important for determining their reach, impact, audiences and character. Many of the most important venues available in Glasgow were cultural ones such as galleries and arts centres. Cultural venues were well placed to host public-facing events and activities during COP26 given that they have a pre-existing public profile and already act as local gathering places.

Offering space was one of the key actions that cultural venues could take to support the climate movement at COP26, given that venue space was at a premium during the conference. Artists looking to share work or host activities during COP needed venue space and many could not confirm their attendance at COP26 until relatively late because they were still sourcing funding. Equally, civil society groups, and especially those from overseas, needed spaces to run meetings and events and many international attendees could not confirm their travel until the last minute because they were awaiting COVID-19 travel passes or visas. These issues were exacerbated when planned civil society venues including Kinning Park Complex and a proposed After the Pandemic space on a piece of disused land had to be cancelled.

More conceptually, cultural venues could provide more space for contemplation and a slower pace than was available in other more fraught spaces. Most of these cultural venues offer free entry and held events that were free to attend. This avoids financial barriers that prevent people from attending climate-focused events and allowed for a much more fluid divide between the venue and the outside world, allowing people to make quick visits without having to necessarily commit time or money. Cultural venues can also have their limitations. For example, we know that cultural venues are more well-used by some demographics than others, which affects how at home people feel in those venues and how likely they are to participate in activities there.

In addition to pre-existing venues, several spaces were temporarily transformed either through putting up non-permanent structures or through occupying or using outdoor spaces like parks and squares. This can allow organisers to create a new identity for the space that is not dependent on a building's previous role or reputation, while outdoor venues provide more scope for people to serendipitously come upon events as well as being more COVID-19-safe. Conversely, temporary venues can face barriers to finding audiences if they do not have a pre-existing profile or reputation.

Arts and cultural spaces

The Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA)

This venue hosted a themed exhibition 'The Word for World is Forest' and played host to events being organised through various other projects, including screenings and installations from Possible Dialogues, events run by the Feminist Exchange Network under the heading 'Feminist Exchanges for Climate Justice', an exhibition created as part of the Phone Call to the World project, performances by Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Choir and window displays organised by the Climate Fringe. Many focused on highlighting perspectives from those living on the frontlines of climate change, especially indigenous peoples.

The Dream Machine

This gallery space was made available by the Climate Fringe as an 'Arts Hub' during COP26. Rather than being an event space, this primarily provided space for anyone running creative work during COP26 to create materials, build props and store equipment and was used by organisations such as the Artist Network.

The Encampment of Eternal Hope

This creation by artistic duo Walker + Bromwich was installed at the Briggait, an old fish market that now houses artist studios, offices and exhibition spaces. The Encampment of Eternal Hope is a mixture of sculptural installation and meeting space that seeks to stimulate new thinking and deep conversation. The space hosted events from Possible Dialogues, the Minga Indigena and Letters to the Earth, among others. The organisers stated a particular focus on amplifying indigenous voices and facilitating exchange between different communities.

The Hidden Gardens and Tramway

This urban greenspace in south Glasgow acted as the home venue for the Minga Indigena, a delegation of 100 elders representing indigenous communities in the Americas. People were invited to visit the gardens and leave offerings that symbolised their appreciation for the planet. The Minga and their creative partner The Allianza organised a sound and light installation in the space and ran a series of events in the neighbouring Tramway gallery including talks, performances and film screenings.

The SpACE

The Space for Architecture, Carbon and Environment (SpACE) was a pop-up venue that opened at the old Fire Station in Edinburgh for the duration of COP26 and for three weeks afterwards. The SpACE hosted an exhibition on climate change and the built environment as well as workshops, debates and seminars.

This different atmosphere that cultural spaces can offer was recognised by civil society venues that held events around COP26. Many of these opted to include cultural contributions such as paintings, photography or installations to help shape the atmosphere of the venue or to temporarily transform it into a quasi-cultural space through installing exhibitions of artistic work.

Civil society spaces

Adelaide Place	Adelaide Place Baptist church was the main venue for the Climate Fringe during COP26. Climate Fringe was a project from Stop Climate Chaos Scotland that sought to broaden opportunities for participation around COP26. The venue provided open space for visitors to the city to use and hosted movement assemblies run by the COP26 Coalition. It housed cultural contributions, including an exhibition from Pintado Murales Derribamos Muros and nightly 'Open Mic Ceilidhs' made up of informal performances from locals and visiting activists. The venue was used for the COP26 Coalition's 'People's Summit', which, alongside discussions and talks, included cultural contributions such as the performance 'Let Them Eat Cake: The Tale of Two Cities' from the group Migrants Organising for Rights and Empowerment (MORE).
Civic House	Civic House was used as venue by the Landworkers' Alliance, a union of farmers, growers, foresters and land-based workers present at COP26 to highlight issues such as food security and land rights that are intimately connected with climate change policy. The venue hosted a photography exhibition and events.
Glasgow Science Centre	The Glasgow Science Centre was designated the official Green Zone where public events linked to the COP would take place. There were performances by Poets for the Planet, the Glasgow Barons in collaboration with refugee and exile musicians, and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra junior chorus, as well as film screenings, and panel discussions with figures including Brian Eno and Ben Okri. Exhibitions by Glasgow School of Art, Museums for Climate Action and others were installed in the space. Arts-led contributions were just one element alongside installations by environmental charities, talks by climate experts and pavilions from corporate sponsors.
Govanhill vs Climate Chaos	Govanhill Baths Trust are a grassroots community organisation based in Govanhill in the south side of Glasgow. They ran their venue The Deep End as a space focused completely on COP26 during the two weeks of the conference under the title 'Govanhill vs Climate Chaos'. They hosted an exhibition from artist Fadzai Mwakutuya's Climate Change Creative project and organised banner making sessions as well as numerous talks and discussions.
New York Times Climate Hub	The New York Times Climate Hub was located at SWG3, a mixed arts venue situated very close to the COP26 site. The programme featured high-profile speakers including Ban Ki-moon and Emma Watson and differed from these other examples in that its events were paid entry. An artwork from Es Devlin, 'The Conference of the Trees', was installed within the space. The work consisted of 197 different trees and plants that matched the 197 parties attending COP26. The Conference of the Trees acted as the venue for many of the Hub's talks and discussions and aimed to provoke creative and alternative lines of thinking.



Es Devlin's Conference of the Trees installed at the New York Times Climate Hub at SWG3. Photo: New York Times.

Arts in the blue zone

This section focuses on public spaces at COP26, but there were artistic and cultural contributions in the closed Blue Zone, including an 'Art of Resilience' exhibition presented by the Coalition for Climate Resilient Investment, a photography exhibition from Climate Visuals, and the presence of Good Chance Theatre's 'Little Amal' puppet as part of a day focusing on gender equality. Protests held in the Blue Zone also employed creative methods including theatre, sculptures of 'carbon unicorns' and a long red ribbon used to signify red lines that cannot be crossed. Official art installations in the Blue Zone included:

- Cécile Girardin, COP26 mural (painted during the conference to depict the negotiations in visual form)
- Oliver Jeffers, People Live Here
- Luke Jerram, Gaia
- Cornelia Parker, Hurry up please it's time
- Joseph Rossano, Salmon School
- Alison Smith and the National Centre for Atmospheric Science, Climate Canopy

Case study 4: 'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing' and 'The Landing Hub'

Wallace Heim

Introduction

Glasgow City Council through a competition process selected New Practice, an architecture practice, and Inhouse CIC to design, build and manage 'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing' as a temporary public space during COP26. Both New Practice and Inhouse have environmental sustainability and social inclusion as core principles. The site was vacant, brownfield land, formerly a petrol station, on Broomielaw, a main road into the official COP26 area on the north side of the River Clyde. Initially, the space was intended to give the Council a physical presence during COP26. It was to showcase corporations and organisations working on material sustainability issues through a predominately information-based, static exhibition for the public.

In the months before COP26, other venues that were planning to host events and exhibitions were finding changes in circumstances and funding meant they were unable to offer space. Many approached the Council asking for their programmes and artists to be shown on the Council's site.

The possibilities for 'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing' expanded to include 'The Landing Hub', a tented area within the site for exhibitions, events, music, talks, meetings, civic engagement and more. The partnership adapted to incorporate the curation and programming of public events by Kirsty Hood from Inhouse Event Solutions CIC and Glasgow artist Bex Anders, both with experience in community, arts and environmental projects and networks. Inhouse, with experience in security as well as in community engagement for and management of large public events, undertook the event management as well as the logistics of the site build.

The project partners had to negotiate the potential for contentious associations between the more corporate exhibitors the Council had invited to exhibit and the more activist installations and presentations in 'The Landing Hub'. Glasgow City Council had final approval over the site design and the programme in dialogue with New Practice and Inhouse.

Temporary public space for exhibitions and events during COP26. new-practice.co.uk/the-sustainable-glasgow-landing

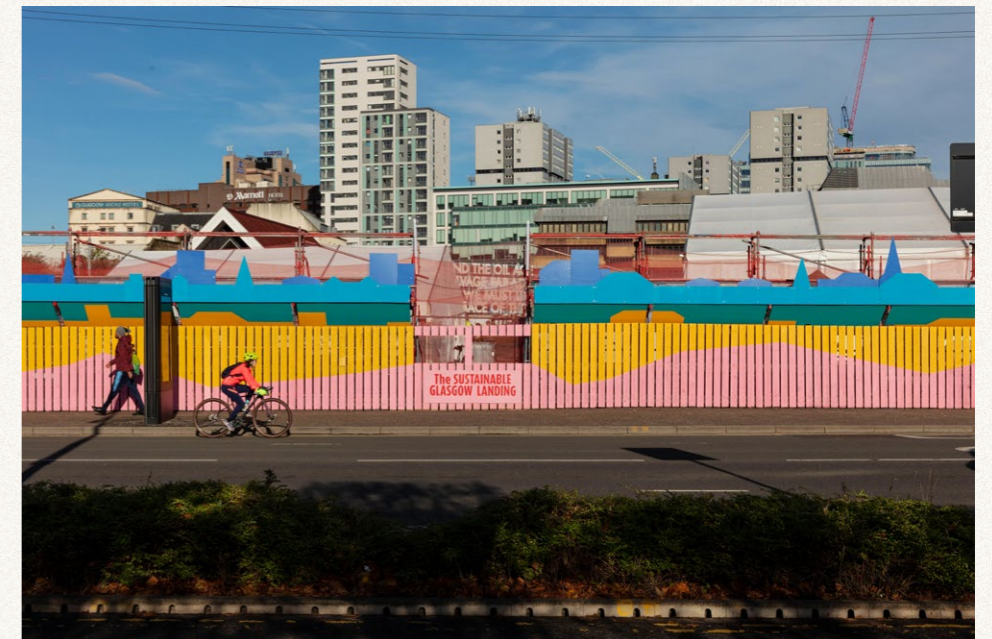
- New Practice, an architectural practice, Maeve Dolan, associate; Samuel Stair, designer
- Inhouse CIC and Inhouse event management, Chet Capkiner, Inhouse Event Productions, Inhouse Event CIC, Inhouse Stewards LTD
- Programmers for 'The Landing Hub': Kirsty Hood, Inhouse Event Solutions CIC, and Bex Anders, artist

The timeframe for transforming the area was around 10 weeks, with the programming of 'The Landing Hub' taking around 8 weeks during that time. The site was 5000 square metres, most of it with overgrown vegetation, uneven concrete, no drainage, no water, no electricity. The project, as it evolved, required the partners within two months "...to create a 17-day culturally significant programme for the public within one kilometre of what would be the highest security risk in the world at the time" as Chet Capkiner from Inhouse put it.

I spoke separately with Samuel Stair from New Practice and Chet Capkiner from Inhouse.

How the partners describe the processes and skills necessary to get this done are most readily those of their respective professional practices. The production model resembles more that of a large-scale arts/theatre production by collaborating professional partners, each with specific skills, and each understanding the needs of the others, working towards a defined goal and to a deadline, than, for example, a long-duration social practice which evolves through continual dialogue. Their ways of assessing the project, the contexts in which it can be evaluated, owe more to their respective professional standards than to how the site could be considered as an artwork in itself.

There is more critical work to be done on how these COP spaces are themselves art-making. But the direction of my longer argument is that these spaces, whether temporary or in existing buildings, are creative, civic-making zones in which conversation, performance, expression, conflict and enjoyment have the chance to flare up around ideas about climate futures. And that how these zones are made – aesthetically, performatively by the public and contributors, by their material construction and their spatial presence in the city, and influenced by their ethical intentions – is significant beyond simply providing a space. These zones draw people in, offer connection and solidarity. They are sites for those wanting change to political and economic systems as well as those seeking an adapted maintenance of those systems. They incorporate everyday life with the excitement of an event outside the official border.



'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing'.
Photo: Alexander Hoyles.

Interview

Programming 'The Landing Hub' and the collaborative processes

Samuel (New Practice): A lot of people even in Glasgow thought COP26 was happening somewhere else, in that closed zone. You didn't have tickets to it, no one saw any of the delegates. It had a veil. 'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing' gave a place for the people of Glasgow to get involved. It allowed people to have a bit of ownership over what was going on in the city.

The element that had the most back and forth and tweaking with the Council wasn't the physical aesthetics but more the identity of 'The Landing Hub', what it was offering and who we included. The Council was fine with everyone we proposed, but it was a case of understanding what each element was bringing to it. And we wanted to hold true to what we thought it should be, which was incorporating local voices, grassroots voices, indigenous voices, intersectional voices across the response to the climate challenge.

Chet (Inhouse): Inhouse's approach to 'The Landing Hub' programming was to ask "Who is under-represented?". We needed to reach out to the people involved in environmental and activist groups, who understand the problems that people are having with COP26.

With 'The Landing Hub', all of a sudden, a quite bland, corporate exhibition gets turned into something that has ongoing content and a diverse demographic coming. It needed to be fun; it needed to be educational; it needed to be engaging; and it needed to touch on things that are going to be controversial. We need to have a platform where things can be spoken about. It's through our social interactions that we can break down a lot of boundaries. We needed to create an environment where people can meet and have their own interpretations and be influenced by a large range of things.

We became the meeting space where the First Minister came but also the work-at-home dad could come with his kid. There is complexity in that.

Wildcard: Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Choir

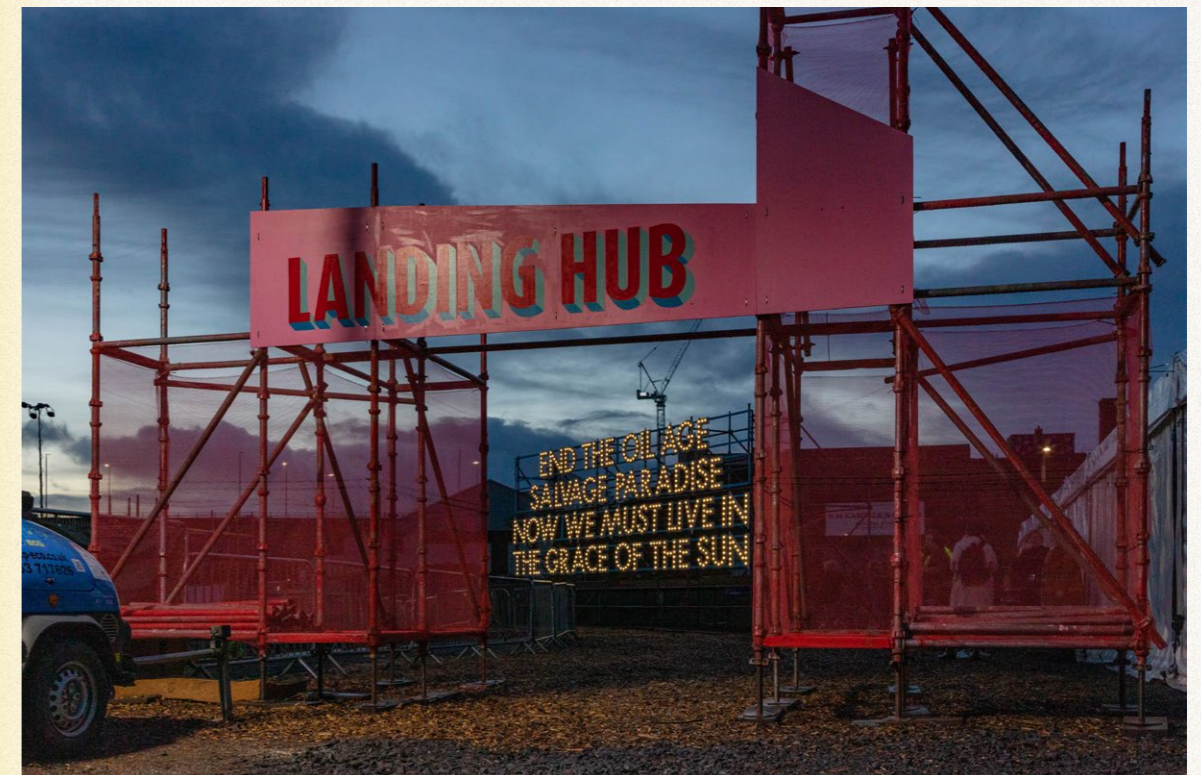
This protest choir visited Glasgow during COP26. As well as scheduled performances at the Centre for Contemporary Arts, they also took part in street protests including against the BP sponsorship of the Scottish Ballet, a sponsorship deal that has since been ended.

Samuel: We were collaborating across a range of scales and timescales. It wasn't only the person-to-person collaborations about how we could bring in the people who wanted to perform or show. It also involved the logistics of building something. We had to understand how the layers of timescales nested together.

The key thing about the collaborations was being ambitious but realistic. We wanted to make sure things can happen, and we didn't want to waste people's time. If you look at this as a more macro concept in terms of sustainability, you don't want to do things twice. You don't want to waste energy. You don't want to waste resources.

Especially with this project, sustainability is not just about the environment. It's also about social and community sustainability. It's also about economic sustainability. And I think that's where the idea of not wanting to waste takes on a different aspect. Small community groups might only have a small pot of funding. They only have one chance to use it, and they deserve a voice and a presence at that space.

It's not just making sure that you're doing it right the first time – because I think an important part of creative artworks and creative community work is that you build, discover, and collaborate together. But I think it is also about having an honesty about when something isn't going to work. Some things weren't going to be possible. We had to say "No" to some people. It wasn't a good idea for them to put in their limited time and money into this.



'The Landing Hub' with sculpture
by Robert Montgomery.
Photo: Alexander Hoyles.

Samuel: Along the facade fence of site, we had a simple cityscape that we'd painted in primary colours on plywood that could be reused. Many people perceive COP26 as being corporate, greenwashed. We didn't want 'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing' to be that. So, rather than the Highlands and a river and the city skyline of Glasgow, we abstracted the shape of a steeple, iconic in the Glasgow skyline, and a line that represents the Campsie Fells. A tourist might not see that a steeple means Glasgow, but a Glasgow citizen would. We wanted that level of recognisability and ownership to come into it, in a more soft and nuanced way that didn't come across as a corporate brand.

In 'The Landing Hub' itself, it felt very stripped, in a positive sense. There wasn't anything in there that didn't need to be there. Yes, we're an architecture firm, but we're not trying to wow you with some materially wasteful folly. It's a tent because that fits the purpose. It's weatherproof; it's waterproof; and it can go away.

On the rest of the site, it was a simple main avenue with a boardwalk. It was sustainably sourced timber from Canada that a company were trying to get the Council to purchase. The boardwalk became their exhibit. We tied exhibition boards to scaffolding, and that was the aesthetic of the exhibition.



**'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing'
site before construction.
Photo: New Practice.**

Samuel: We can get into the semantics of what is performance art versus what is spectacle. What is performance art versus what is just 'performance'? For a lot of the visitors, it would be a work of temporary spectacle. This is a site-specific installation. There are all these words you can throw around about art and performance so that the space can exist within a definition.

But there's also the idea of art and culture as something that's a bit more fluid and related to the network of identities within a city and to the way people interact and to the kind of thoughts and opinions that come out of those interactions between people in space, in their community. I think that is where 'The Landing Hub' existed. It wasn't necessarily a physical piece of art, or even a time-based piece of art, being a performance thing, but it was something that is more within the grain of the community and the city.

And that's where the artistic lies as well, in the way that people were in the space as visitors, as watchers, as talkers, as performers. Everyone was doing many roles but all under this umbrella of being about Glasgow. And the question then, is what is Glasgow? Where does the boundary of Glasgow stop and blur?

Sustainability and time exhaustion

Wallace: Given the scale and deadline demands of the project, did you ever have a moment of asking "Why are we doing this?"

Samuel: We were all very consciously aware of the triangle of sustainability: environmental, economic or political, and social. We were all wanting to hit elements of it across the project. We wanted to make a point of it not just being about material sustainability and not just being about a glitzy-tech-political-Elon-Musk-is-going-to-save-the-world kind of sustainability.

The project, though, highlighted the difficulty of trying to do anything of this scale sustainably. Everything that's cheaper and more readily available isn't sustainable - and this project highlights the importance changing that. There needs to be another way to do this, and the only way we're going to do this is by struggling through more people doing it.

There were definitely long nights of "Why are we doing this?" but I don't think it was ever a case that we wished that we weren't. I think there was always a strong answer as to why we're doing it. It coalesced a lot of our skills, showed them off to a wider audience, but it also allowed us to be a part of something important.

Chet: We were exhausted. When you're building a temporary site like that under a very, very short timeframe, there's a lot of pressure physically and mentally to get through it. So, we were just relieved by the time we got it open. After a few days, we could say "We've done all right here considering this was a jungle eight weeks ago." We'd turned this into this place that people can meet, communicate, and hopefully we're breaking down the barriers between the people that are attending this event, and creating a safe, sustainable space that allows cultural activity.

What did you learn?

Chet: A lot of time and energy, and percentage of the project's budget, had to go into making the ground suitable. A better choice of site might allow more money for programming or to make the experience better for people. There's money coming into the city from outside organisations as well as council or government money getting used for projects. Considering how that economic impact affects smaller organisations, if we consider how to reduce the money costs to run a site, there might be more of a trickle-down to artistic organisations or third-sector organisations.

Samuel: The main thing was learning about the importance of being ambitious but realistic. Also learning the different ways in which collaboration and sustainability can go hand-in-hand across a spatial scale and in time. For example, we have prepared that site in a way that Scottish Enterprise, who own it, can use it for another purpose. That's a softer form of collaboration and sustainability within a built environment sense, making sure that what you're doing doesn't result in more resources being spent, more embodied energy being put into a future project.

Would we do an events program again? I'm not sure. Another lesson from COP26 is that architectural design and community consultation are not the same as event programming and event planning. We would definitely do a brief again that was a celebration of the city. Would it be a two-week long events program with fifty different speakers and a hundred different marches coming along it? I don't know. But I think we would definitely do a civic space again that incorporates people having a presence and ownership over the city they're in.

Chet: 'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing' allowed us to implement our own ideologies at a city-wide level. We got to create the platform for smaller, local organisations that wouldn't have the opportunity to be represented. We met a lot of people with good ideas, and there was a kind of solidarity between the more corporate organisations and the more community-led and artistic organisations. It was good to be the glue that pulled that together.

Further information

Information about 'The Sustainable Glasgow Landing' on the New Practice [website](#).

[About New Practice](#).

About Inhouse, [here](#) and [here](#).

Funding: Glasgow City Council, Scottish Enterprise, National Lottery Community Fund, Scottish Government.



An outdoor exhibition at 'The Landing Hub'.
Photo: Alexander Hoyles.

Wildcard: Art of Change 21

This organisation was founded for COP21 in Paris and has organised artistic engagements with COPs ever since. For COP26, they commissioned new work from artists John Gerrard and Lucy Orta (the latter working with students at Glasgow School of Art), organised an exhibition at Saltspace Gallery, and ran panel discussions both within the COP26 Blue Zone and at public venues.

Reflections and conclusions

Lewis Coenen-Rowe

Key trends and lessons

The Digital

Digital methods like online performances, website 'galleries', and specially designed web resources were a feature of arts and cultural engagement with COP26. This was necessitated by COVID-19, but it had co-benefits like improved participation for people with mobility limitations and those living in remote locations. Online meeting platforms also helped support international collaborations and is likely to be carried forward to collaborations for COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Digital approaches may become an active choice for future COPs, given the complexities of venues and travel and the need to involve broader audiences.

Energy and Capacity

Many of the interviewees for our case studies reported periods of exhaustion both leading up to and after COP26. The increased pressure associated with COPs and the tendency for projects to expand in scope can put a severe strain on the physical and mental resources of organisers. Passionate individuals are willing to endure this, but organisations and project funders should be aware of the risk of burnout. There is a balance to be struck between using the COP context as an opportunity to stretch yourself and learn while being realistic about what can be achieved and being able to say no to additional workload.

Flexibility

Many of the projects discussed began without knowing where they would end up. Sometimes this was dictated by necessity: the need to get started before knowing how many people would be interested in participating; the uncertainties that resulted from COVID-19. Often it was a purposeful decision: wanting the results of the work to be dictated by the process or emerge from discussions with participants. Such approaches require a high degree of flexibility and a willingness to accept uncertainty as part of the process.

Funding

Difficulties in obtaining funding or the need to depend on volunteers and donated time and resources are key threads running through the conversations we had. The kind of projects featured here remain difficult to obtain funding for as they often fall between the requirements of climate change and cultural funders. Projects of this kind also tend to involve unpredictable outcomes and their successfulness may not be best measured by quantitative evaluation that is often favoured by funders. Developing ongoing arts and cultural projects around future COPs requires building understanding from funders and finding effective ways to evaluate the work.

Location

Finding the right location was vital for working effectively. Even projects that did not originate in Glasgow and did not aim to directly influence the talks themselves wanted a presence in Glasgow. Reasons for this included the potential for increased attention and media exposure as well as the need to feel part of a historic moment. However, it is notable that those with a presence in Glasgow were not necessarily more effective at garnering attention and some organisers in Glasgow reported equivalent feelings of separation from COP itself to those in the Highlands. Choice of venue was in some ways more important, with major differences in audiences between the Green Zone and Adelaide Place influencing the results of artistic work in each venue, for example.

The Long-Term

Although COP itself lasts two weeks, many of the projects discussed here deliberately focused on a longer period working in some cases for over a year ahead of COP26 itself to develop ideas and build movements. Many of them aspired for long-term changes that would persist beyond the conference itself, such as organisational changes and new relationships. Some have since looked to establish connections with Egyptian counterparts for COP27. Those who did operate intensively over a limited period, such as the Bare Project, discussed the importance of considering what can be achieved in a limited time and how work can remain meaningful after you have finished.

Purpose

For many of these projects the purpose lay in the process of working with participants. Most were not offering radically new ideas or messages, instead drawing on existing statements from COP26 organisers or activists (although there are exceptions). However, they provided an opportunity to dwell on and explore these ideas in an active and participatory way, providing a meaningful and memorable experience. Participants reported positive results like improved motivation although these psychological and emotional impacts are difficult to measure fully.

Tips and advice

The COP period itself is crowded, making it difficult to garner attention or attract audiences and leading to the risk of competing for limited airtime or attendees. When planning cultural projects for COPs, it is worth considering whether they need to take place during the COP or in the host city itself to avoid competition. The lead-up to COP26 still offers the benefit of increased attention on the issue while following on from COP26 there is a need to sustain and direct interest. People living in areas of Scotland at a distance from Glasgow expressed feelings of disconnection from the event while some Glasgow residents complained that COP26 had taken over the city too much. More work taking place in other parts of the country could have improved this situation.

During COP26, arts and cultural projects were also competing for media focus with more obviously attention-grabbing announcements from the conference as well as protests and civil society projects. However, it is worth noting that the Climate Fringe's own report (see [Further Resources](#)) stressed that there was a high level of press interest in arts and cultural contributions, especially those with a strong visual component. For arts and cultural projects seeking press attention, having connections with civil society organisations like the Climate Fringe that field a lot of press enquiries could be very fruitful.



A protest band plays in the rain.
Photo: Midia Ninja.



Messages from children displayed on a 'tree'
in the COP26 Blue Zone.
Photo: Catriona Patterson.

People planning for COP26 were aware of the need to work together and prevent competition. The COP26 Coalition set up a culture working group to help communication between different projects, while Creative Carbon Scotland organised events and an #arts4cop26 Facebook group. Elsewhere, initiatives like the Climate Fringe and Culture at COP provided online events listing and information. This work helped improve communication between people making cultural plans for COP26 and created a greater sense of a united cultural 'movement' for COP. Nevertheless, a key concern that many organisers shared in the leadup to COP26 was the difficulty finding out what was happening. Although a complete view of all COP plans is never attainable, devoting time and resources early on to ensuring good lines of communication is valuable.

A key project leading up to COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and COP28 in the United Arab Emirates, will be to sustain and develop these connections and develop communication with counterparts in the upcoming host cities and countries to pass on the lessons that have been learned and support ongoing arts and cultural engagement with COPs. The political and social context in the COP27 and COP28 locations will be extremely different to in Glasgow and those planning to continue work will need to work closely with local counterparts to ensure that the approaches used are helpful or even desired.

Closing notes

About us

About Creative Carbon Scotland

Creative Carbon Scotland believes in the essential role of the arts, screen, cultural and creative industries in contributing to the transformational change to a more environmentally sustainable Scotland. We work directly with individuals, organisations and strategic bodies engaged across cultural and sustainability sectors to harness the role of culture in achieving this change. Through year-round work and one-off projects, we combine strategic expertise and consultancy, bespoke carbon management training and guidance, and a range of programmes supporting the development of artistic practices that address sustainability and climate change.

www.creativecarbonscotland.com

About Lewis-Coenen-Rowe

Lewis Coenen-Rowe is culture/SHIFT officer at Creative Carbon Scotland with a background in music, research and environmental campaigning.

About Wallace Heim

Wallace Heim works as a philosopher, writer and sculptor within the fields of art/performance and ecology. www.wallaceheim.com

About CreaTures

CreaTures – Creative Practices for Transformational Futures is EU Horizon 2020 research project investigating the potential of creative practices in art, design, and related cultural fields to support positive eco-social change. The project responds to current social and environmental challenges and the urgent need to find new, more sustainable and nourishing ways of living and being together on our shared planet. Recognising that a major role in fostering this societal change is played by the cultural sector, CreaTures brings together diverse creative practices that aim to support eco-social change and examines their transformational processes and strategies. creatures-eu.org

About Savannah Vize (Graphic design)

Savannah Vize is a visual and service designer, specialising in design for eco-social change. campsite.bio/savannahvize

Further resources

- [The official text of the Glasgow Climate Pact](#)
- [UN Secretary-General statement on COP26](#)
- [Creative Carbon Scotland's history of arts and culture at COPs](#)
- [Climate Fringe's report on their work for COP26](#)
- [Report by Season for Change about arts and cultural activities around COP26 in England](#)
- [Rules on cultural events in UN spaces](#)
- [Climate Outreach analysis of narratives around COP26 across traditional media, social media and culture.](#)

Alphabetical list of COP26 projects

A list of COP26 projects with a focus on arts and culture, or with arts and cultural elements, which took place at least partly in Scotland. All links are correct at the time of writing. We cannot guarantee that links will stay active in the future.

Name	Link for further information
1.5° Film Challenge	filmaccess.scot/climate-challenge-1-5-degrees-films/
After the Pandemic	afterthepandemic.scot/cop26/
And if Not Now When?	gridiron.org.uk/2021/10/05/and-if-not-now-when/
Architects Climate Action Network Hub at New Glasgow Society East	architectscan.org/cop26
The Argyll Ark	climatefringe.org/the-man-who-built-an-ark/
Art of Change 21	artofchange21.com/en/art-of-change-21-artistic-programme-at-cop26-with-john-gerrard-and-lucy-orta/
Art of the Possible	gsa.ac.uk/life/gsa-events/events/a/art-of-the-possible
The Awakening	cateranecomuseum.co.uk/the-awakening/
Centre for Contemporary Arts COP26 Programme	cca-glasgow.com/whats-on/collection/cop26
Clean Power Flags	dezeen.com/2021/11/02/cop26-daily-briefing-morag-myerscough-flags/
Climate Action Needs Culture Film	vimeo.com/643933667
Climate Beacons for COP26	creativecarbonscotland.com/project/climate-beacons-for-cop26/

Name	Link for further information
Climate Change Creative	climatechangecreative.com/
Climate Crisis Film Festival	climatecrisisff.co.uk/program
Climate Fringe Hub at Adelaide Place	climatefringe.org/events/ceilidh-nights/
Climate Fringe Week	climatefringe.org/climate-fringe-week-launch/
Climate Fringe Window Displays Project	docs.google.com/document/d/1zBly_n0wq65Kw_Kb11xLujCkKLu3j6jD396zUMfldoaU/edit?usp=sharing
Climate of Hope at Eden Court	eden-court.co.uk/climate-crisis/climate-of-hope
Climate Portals Festival at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	rcs.ac.uk/climate-portals-festival/
COP TV	syff.scot/coptv/
Culture at COP Website	cultureatcop.com/
Dear Green Bothy	deargreenbothy.gla.ac.uk/
Dear Green Place at Platform	platform-online.co.uk/latest/article/dear-green-place
Design for Planet Festival	designforplanet.org/agenda
The Dream Machine, Climate Fringe Arts Hub	new.opengreenmap.org/browse/sites/6115290e68ffa70100d895ec
Dynamic Earth COP26 Programme	dynamicearthonline.co.uk/lp-cop-and-climate-change
The Encampment of Eternal Hope	rbge.org.uk/whats-on/inverleith-house/climate-house-presents/the-encampment-of-eternal-hope/
Fearless Collective Mural	fearlesscollective.org/project/glasgow-cop26/
Feral Live Wireless	sound-art.de/index.php?/radio/the-radio/
The Fifth Giant (or What Would You Do?)	lytharts.org.uk/the-fifth-giant-or-what-would-you-do/
Galoshans Festival 2021	galoshansfestival.com/programme-2021
Glasgow Film Theatre COP26 Programme	glasgowfilm.org/shows/cop26
Govan Free State	govanfreestate.scot/

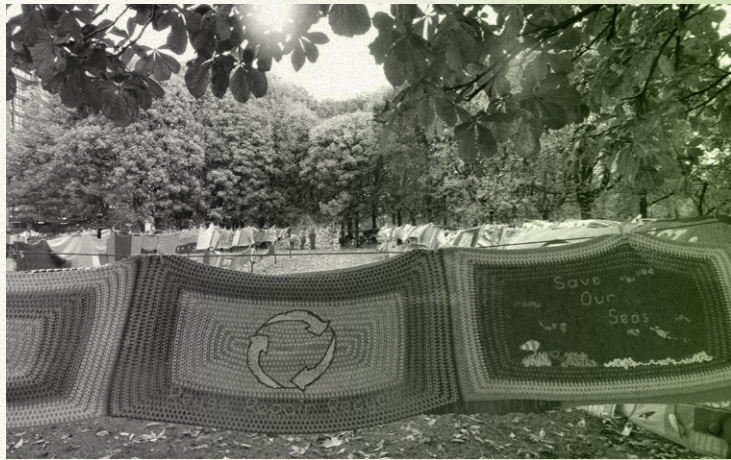
Govanhill vs Climate Chaos	govanhillbaths.com/govanhillvsclimatechaos/
Green Zone Events	ukcop26.org/the-conference/green-zone-programme-of-events/
Green Zone Exhibits	ukcop26.org/the-conference/green-zone-programme-of-events/green-zone-exhibitors/
Hell Bus	spellingmistakescostlives.com/hellbus
Indestructible Language	mecarroll.com/indestructible-language/
If Not Us Who? If Not Today When?	ifnotuswhocop26.com/
Insect Ambassador	insectambassador.org/
Inverclyde Climate Beacon	beaconartscentre.co.uk/take-part/inverclyde-s-climate-beacon/
LAND	ecoartcharity.org/Projects-LAND
The Land for Those That Work It	lytharts.org.uk/climate-beacons/
Land Workers' Alliance hub at Civic House	civic-house.com/events/land-workers-alliance-cop26-programme-at-civic-house/
Làn Thìde (Outer Hebrides Climate Beacon)	lanthide.org/
The Last Aliens	scottishopera.org.uk/join-in/opera-for-schools/the-last-aliens/
Leaves for Life	leavesfor.life/
Let it Grow	letitgrow.scot/
Let Them Eat Cake: The Tale of Two Cities	youtube.com/watch?v=YjzXVYA9E
Loving Earth	lovingearth-project.uk
Message in a Bottle	taigh-chearsabhigh.org/events/cop26messagebottle/
Midlothian Climate Beacon	nationalminingmuseum.com/learn/midlothian-climate-beacon/
Minga Indigena COP26 Programme at Hidden Gardens	mingaindigena.org/activities-at-cop26
Moths to a Flame	mothstoafame.art/

Name	Link for further information
National Theatre of Scotland COP26 Programme	nationaltheatrescotland.com/latest/national-theatre-of-scotland-at-cop26
New York Times Climate Hub	climatehub.nytimes.com/
No New Worlds	stillmoving.org/projects/no-new-worlds-cop26
Ocean ARTic	masts.ac.uk/cop-26/ocean-artic/
Our Plastic Ocean	streetlevelphotoworks.org/event/our-plastic-ocean-mandy-barker
Paisley Windows on COP26	paisleyfirst.com/project/paisley-windows-on-cop26/
People's Summit for Climate Justice	cop26coalition.org/peoples-summit/
Phone Call to the World	phonecalltotheworld.org/
Pilgrimage for COP26	artandecology.earth/pilgrimage-for-cop26/
Pollution Pods	glasgowwestend.co.uk/the-pollution-pods-cop26-at-gartnavel/
The Portrayals	theportrayals.com/
Positive Imaginings	rowanbank.org.uk/positive-imaginings
Possible Dialogues	masartemasaccion.org/possible-dialogues/?lang=en
Preserving Pasts Imagining Futures	nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/features/preserving-pasts-imagining-futures
RSC Glasgow	rccglasgow.com/
Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Choir	cca-glasgow.com/programme/reverend-billy-and-the-stop-shopping-choir
Royal Scottish National Orchestra COP26 Programme	rsno.org.uk/the-rsno-at-cop26/
Sagacity	climatefringe.org/sagacity/
Saltspace Gallery Exhibitions	saltspacecoop.co.uk/archive/'paleo-energy'-by-atelier-21-%26-'jambreen%2C-australian-rainforest-erasure'-by-roslun-taplin
Scene Stirling COP26 Commissions	scenestirling.squarespace.com/climate-change-showcase

Scotland's Climate Ambition Zone at The Lighthouse	gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-cop26-achieved/pages/5/
Scottish Classical Sustainability Group Day of Action	nevisensemble.org/scottish-classical-sustainability-group/
Scottish Maritime Museum COP26 Programme	scottishmaritimemuseum.org/the-scottish-maritime-museum-invites-young-people-to-create-their-own-protest-posters/
Shine a Light	theartsyardglasgow.com/
The SpACE	space-edinburgh.com/
Still/Moving COP26 Interventions	stillmoving.org/projects/cop26-interventions
Stitches for Survival	stitchesforsurvival.earth/
Storm	visionmechanics.org/glasgow-cop26/
Sub Mari	rednoteensemble.com/event/the-red-note-sessions-sub-mari/
The Sustainable Glasgow Landing and The Landing Hub	new-practice.co.uk/the-sustainable-glasgow-landing
Symbiosis	sco.org.uk/events/symbiosis
Tayside Climate Beacon	taysideclimatebeacon.com/
Totem Latamat	bordercrossings.org.uk/whats-on/programme/totem-latamat
Turbulence/Emergence/Enchantment at Cove Park	covepark.org/turbulence-emergence-enchantment-a-compendium-of-climate-literacies/
The Walk	goodchance.org.uk/amalcop26
Walking Forest	walkingforest.co.uk/
What the COP?	takeoneaction.org.uk/what-the-cop/
Yince a Paradise	dunedin-consort.org.uk/diary/yince-a-paradise-aberdeen/



**Top: 'Let it Grow'.
Photo: Louise Montgomery.**



**Bottom: 'Stitches for Survival'.
Photo: courtesy of 'Stitches for Survival'.**



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CREATURES