



Green Policy & Climate Action Plan 2025-2027

Developed in tandem with DMT's 2026 Strategic Framework and to be reviewed annually in line with the development of our programme, and the further development of the site at Exchange Street.

Who We Are

Dublin Municipal Theatre (DMT) is Dublin's municipal theatre, operating from the historic site of Smock Alley in the heart of the city. Occupying a building that has served as a place of gathering, storytelling and civic exchange since 1662, DMT holds a responsibility not only to artistic excellence but to the long-term cultural and ecological wellbeing of Dublin.

Across three spaces - the Main Space, the Boys School and the Banquet Hall, DMT produces, presents, supports, and hosts work by artists from Dublin, Ireland, and beyond, welcoming more than 30,000 annual users through performances, workshops, community programmes, and public events. As a publicly accountable cultural institution, DMT recognises that climate action is inseparable from our civic responsibilities.

Why sustainability is integral to DMT

DMT acknowledges that we are operating within a climate emergency that demands collective and structural change. As custodians of a 350-year-old building, we understand the need to care for and adapt our infrastructure while reducing the environmental impact of our activities.

Theatre buildings are resource-intensive spaces. They require energy, materials, travel, labour, and technical infrastructure. At the same time, theatres shape public imagination, behaviour, and civic conversation. DMT therefore recognises that its role is not only to reduce emissions and waste but to model more sustainable and equitable ways of working within the cultural sector.

We aim to contribute positively to Dublin City Council's climate ambitions in how we plan and deliver our activities and how we steward the site of Ireland's first purpose-built theatre into the coming decades.

Cultural Grounding

The site of Dublin Municipal Theatre carries a unique environmental legacy. It is where Cultivate - Ireland's pioneering eco-organisation - was founded, and where the courtyard garden in the heart of Temple Bar was originally planted as an ecological demonstration project. This plan seeks to reconnect with that founding vision: to restore the garden as a living community climate resource and to ensure DMT's sustainability work is rooted in the spirit of what was begun here.

Our approach is informed by the Irish concept of *dúchas* - an understanding of belonging that connects people, place, memory, and responsibility. *Dúchas* reminds us that value does not arise solely through ownership, productivity, or extraction, but through relationship, continuity, and care. This means understanding the theatre not simply as a venue or asset, but as part of a

wider living system that includes artists, audiences, neighbours, materials, waterways, biodiversity, and future generations.

What We Want to Achieve

DMT aims to become a leading example of sustainable and socially responsible cultural practice in Ireland. We recognise that environmental action is not only technical but cultural, requiring shifts in behaviour, imagination, governance, and everyday practice.

Through this policy and action plan, DMT commits to:

- **Championing low-carbon design** as an artistic opportunity through the development of a Makers Co-Operative - a practical, artist-led initiative that will provide shared studio space, resources, and skill exchange for designers and technicians across the city.
- **Reducing production-based energy use** and embedding sustainable operational practices across all areas of the organisation, including through a heritage-compatible LED lighting retrofit and the replacement of our end-of-life heating and cooling systems.
- **Securing investment for long-term retrofit** and infrastructure planning that protects the historic building while reducing carbon impact, working in line with Dublin City Council's climate targets.
- **Welcoming local Dublin 8 communities to our community garden** and, over time, restoring the Cultivate courtyard garden as a biodiversity-rich, climate-resilient city resource, reconnecting the site with its ecological legacy.
- **Modelling collaborative and non-extractive ways of working** grounded in reciprocity, shared learning and collective care both internally and how we engage with artists and local communities.
- **Sharing learning openly** and contributing to wider climate conversations across the cultural and civic sectors and developing DMT's capacity as a platform for our audiences to better understand the impact of environmentally responsible behaviours.
- **Prioritising circular and regenerative approaches** to materials, production processes, food, and waste management in our production and hospitality pipelines as we develop new public initiatives to activate the building, including building tours and co-working spaces.

Shared Stewardship and Ways of Working

The Dublin Municipal Theatre Green Team operates as a space of shared stewardship where staff from across the organisation come together to reflect, question, and co-create. Leadership within this model is distributed. The CEO and Senior Management Team support the integration of sustainability across planning, programming, and operations, while the broader

team, artists, technicians and partners are encouraged to contribute ideas and initiate change from where they stand.

This work is supported at governance level, ensuring alignment with Dublin City Council's Climate Action Plan while enabling experimentation, learning, and shared ownership across the organisation.

Green Team Reflective Practice

The DMT Green Team approaches sustainability as an ongoing process of reflection, learning, and relationship-building. Alongside practical operational work, the group regularly asks:

- How are our decisions strengthening relationships between the theatre, the city, and the wider environment?
- What behaviours or systems within the organisation need to shift in order to reduce harm and encourage care?
- How can sustainability become visible within the everyday culture of the theatre rather than existing as a separate initiative?
- What opportunities exist for collaboration, shared learning, and co-creation with artists, audiences, staff, and local communities?
- How can we value repair, maintenance, reuse, and restoration as creative and civic practices?
- What forms of knowledge, labour, or ecological care are currently undervalued within our systems, and how might we recognise them differently?

Action Plan

Objective 1: Reduce Energy Use and Improve Infrastructure

A key priority is the replacement and upgrading of building systems that currently generate excessive energy use and seasonal overheating. Our existing lighting stock is largely tungsten and halogen-based, operates for long hours during rehearsals, technical periods, and performances, and generates significant radiant heat — placing strain on our ageing heating and cooling systems, which are themselves at end of life.

- Proceed with the heritage-compatible LED lighting retrofit, reducing electricity demand, heat output, and maintenance requirements across all spaces.
- Commission a specialist energy audit to validate and optimise the overall retrofit pathway and identify further low-carbon opportunities appropriate to a protected structure.
- Develop a sustainable replacement plan for our heating and cooling systems, drawing on best-practice models for heritage buildings.
- Continue monitoring energy consumption and waste data across the building.
- Promote energy-conscious behaviours among staff, artists, and visiting companies through communication and training.

Objective 2: Restore the Cultivate Garden and Increase Biodiversity

The courtyard garden at Smock Alley was originally planted under the direction of Cultivate, Ireland's pioneering eco-organisation. DMT will restore and future-proof this space as a

climate-resilient, biodiversity-rich urban garden — reconnecting with that founding vision and demonstrating how heritage sites can lead local environmental action.

- Restore the courtyard as a micro-biodiversity hub supporting native species, pollinators, layered planting, and healthy soil systems.
- Replace existing flower boxes with pollinator-friendly, native planting.
- Install swift and bat boxes within roof spaces where feasible.
- Deliver community volunteer days, ecological workshops, and youth engagement around the garden.
- Develop partnerships with local environmental and community groups in Dublin 8, including the Liberties Festival and local migrant community organisations.
- Use the garden as a setting for community planting and storytelling workshops where participants explore the plants and flavours that carry cultural meaning, with shared meals and tasting events in the Banquet Hall.

Objective 3: Embed Sustainable Organisational Culture

- Introduce a sustainability induction for all new staff members and visiting companies.
- Deliver regular staff training on waste management, energy reduction, and sustainable practices.
- Embed sustainability considerations into planning, procurement, and operational decision-making.
- Encourage shared ownership of climate actions across departments.

Objective 4: Support Sustainable Artistic Practice through the Artists Co-Operative

A central and distinctive element of DMT's climate action is the establishment of an Artists Co-Operative - a practical, artist-led initiative seeded through our Emerging Artists programme. Inspired by working models in France, Australia, and elsewhere, the Co-Operative will provide shared studio and workshop space for designers, makers, and technicians, addressing a pressing gap in Dublin's infrastructure for the cultural sector.

- Establish the Artists Co-Operative as a membership organisation, with a nominal joining fee providing access to shared workshop and studio space.
- Develop a model which can operate out of our site, as an artist-led body, a practical facility for building, workshopping, and resourcing productions.
- Appoint a rotating administrative lead within the Co-Operative, responsible for maintaining a shared stock list of resources across theatre companies and for timetabling and managing the space.
- Position the Co-Operative as a hub for skill-sharing, upskilling, and collaborative making reducing duplication, waste, and the carbon footprint of individual production processes.
- Encourage circular and low-carbon design practices, reuse of materials, and resource-sharing between member companies and productions.
- Support designers and makers in exploring sustainable production methods through the Co-Operative's network and programming.
- Build partnerships and knowledge-sharing opportunities between the Co-Operative and wider sustainability initiatives in the Irish cultural sector.

Objective 5: Encourage Sustainable Travel

- Gather audience travel data to better understand transport patterns.
- Promote public transport, walking, and cycling through ticketing communications and website information.
- Advocate for improved cycling infrastructure in the surrounding Temple Bar area.
- Explore opportunities to incentivise low-carbon audience travel.

Objective 6: Improve Waste and Resource Management

- Improve waste separation systems across front-of-house, backstage, and office spaces.
- Minimise contamination of recycling through clear signage and staff training.
- Support food redistribution initiatives and reduce food waste from events and catering.
- Continue implementing Deposit Return Scheme practices across bar operations.
- Develop composting practices linked to the Cultivate garden restoration.
- Work with suppliers and contractors who align with sustainable and circular economy principles.
- Reduce reliance on single-use materials and encourage reuse, repair, and shared resources between productions.

Looking Forward

DMT understands this policy as a living document that will continue to evolve through dialogue, experimentation, and collective learning. Climate action is not a fixed destination but an ongoing practice of adaptation, stewardship, and imagination.

The Artists Co-Operative represents our most significant new strategic commitment in this area: a practical, sector-wide intervention that treats sustainability not as a constraint on artistic work but as a catalyst for new ways of collaborating, making, and sharing. By seeding it through our Soft Capital Emerging Artists programme, we ensure that the next generation of Irish theatre-makers has access to the infrastructure, relationships and values that sustainable practice requires.

Alongside this, the restoration of the Cultivate garden and the ongoing work to retrofit and future-proof our historic building represent a commitment to place to the specific ecology, community, and civic life of Dublin 8, and to the long-term stewardship of a site that has gathered people for over 350 years.

As Dublin’s municipal theatre, we believe cultural institutions have an important role to play in shaping more sustainable futures -not only by reducing environmental impact, but by creating spaces where new relationships, values, and possibilities can emerge.