

# Climate Impact Research

FINAL REPORT: MARCH 2023



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## Executive Summary

In early 2022, Fun Palaces commissioned The Lines Between to undertake a study about the environmental impact of the Fun Palaces Weekend, an annual, nationwide festival where local people across the UK work together to host their own cultural and community events.

Researchers at The Lines Between used surveys, interviews and case studies to gather data about the carbon footprint of the Fun Palaces Annual Weekend. Event hosts, attendees, members of the Fun Palaces team and wider stakeholders were consulted throughout the study.

The majority of those who took part in the research considered the overall carbon impact of the Fun Palaces Annual Weekend to be low. There was broad agreement that the emissions which can be attributed to the Fun Palaces Weekend are minimal, for the following reasons:

- Fun Palaces are mainly attended by local people, which means the mileage/carbon footprint associated with travelling to events is low. In addition, Fun Palaces are often delivered in conjunction with other events or happen in popular public spaces, and therefore people would have been visiting venues even if the Fun Palace was not taking place.
- Many of the events take place in public buildings, such as libraries, which would have been open on the day of the event anyway, so little additional energy use could be attributed to the Fun Palace. A significant portion also take place outside, where there is very little or no energy usage.
- There is an ethos of sharing, and “making the most of what we have” among the Fun Palaces community, so few things are purchased solely for Fun Palaces, and there is very little wasted or not reused after the event.

Participants in the study also reflected on Fun Palaces' important role in influencing change, promoting sustainable practices and instilling positive environmental behaviours within communities.

Finally, the research highlighted Fun Palaces' organisational commitment to sustainability and lowering the carbon footprint of their operations. The team at Fun Palaces confirmed that they have plans to continue investing time and resources into climate action and advocacy in the future.





## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Fun Palaces is an annual, free, nationwide campaign to encourage local people to co-create their own cultural and community events through a variety of mediums including arts, science, heritage, music and sports. The events take place across the UK during the first weekend of October every year. Members of the public can sign up online via the [Fun Palaces website](#) to register an event in their local community.
- 1.2. The Fun Palaces team is made up of a central body of headquarters staff, and several community-based Ambassadors who work in partnership with a variety of cultural and creative organisations across the UK to support, promote and explore opportunities for Fun Palaces.
- 1.3. Over the past 10 years, there have been over 2500 Fun Palaces hosted across the UK and beyond. Each year, there is huge variety in the events on offer, with recent examples including photography, film making, gardening, coding, yoga, arts & crafts, and local history lessons. Event participants and hosts – or ‘Makers’ – report year after year that Fun Palaces are enjoyable, inspirational and create a strong sense of community spirit.

### Climate Impact Research

- 1.4. The team at Fun Palaces have gathered clear evidence of the social and cultural impact of the Fun Palaces Weekend, but in recent years have become interested in exploring the environmental impact of the events too.
- 1.5. In early 2022, Fun Palaces commissioned Edinburgh-based social research agency The Lines Between to undertake a study about the environmental impact of the Fun Palaces Annual Weekend.
- 1.6. The aim of the research was to generate evidence about the sustainability, environmental impact and carbon footprint of the Fun Palaces annual event, and identify opportunities for future Fun Palace Weekends to become more environmentally friendly.

## Methodology

- 1.7. A mixed-methods approach was used; researchers at The Lines Between used surveys, interviews and case studies to gather data.

### Surveys

- 1.8. Each year, the Fun Palaces team undertake a post-event survey of Makers. In 2021 and 2022, a number of questions related to sustainability were added to the survey. The new questions explored the extent to which sustainability and the environment factored into the planning of events, the carbon emissions attached to events, and considerations of how the environmental impact of the Annual Weekend could be reduced in the future.
- 1.9. The survey was completed by 117 Makers in 2021, and 91 Makers in 2022.
- 1.10. The Lines Between was also given access to a survey of 139 Fun Palaces attendees, which collected details about their mode of transport and distance travelled to the event. Analysis of survey responses is included in Chapter 3.

### Qualitative interviews

- 1.11. The research team interviewed 8 stakeholders with insight on: Fun Palaces strategic approach to sustainability; the carbon footprint of the Fun Palaces Annual Weekend; and wider knowledge of the environmental impact of the community and cultural sector. Interviewees included Fun Palaces leadership team, Ambassadors and consultants who have worked with Fun Palaces in recent years.

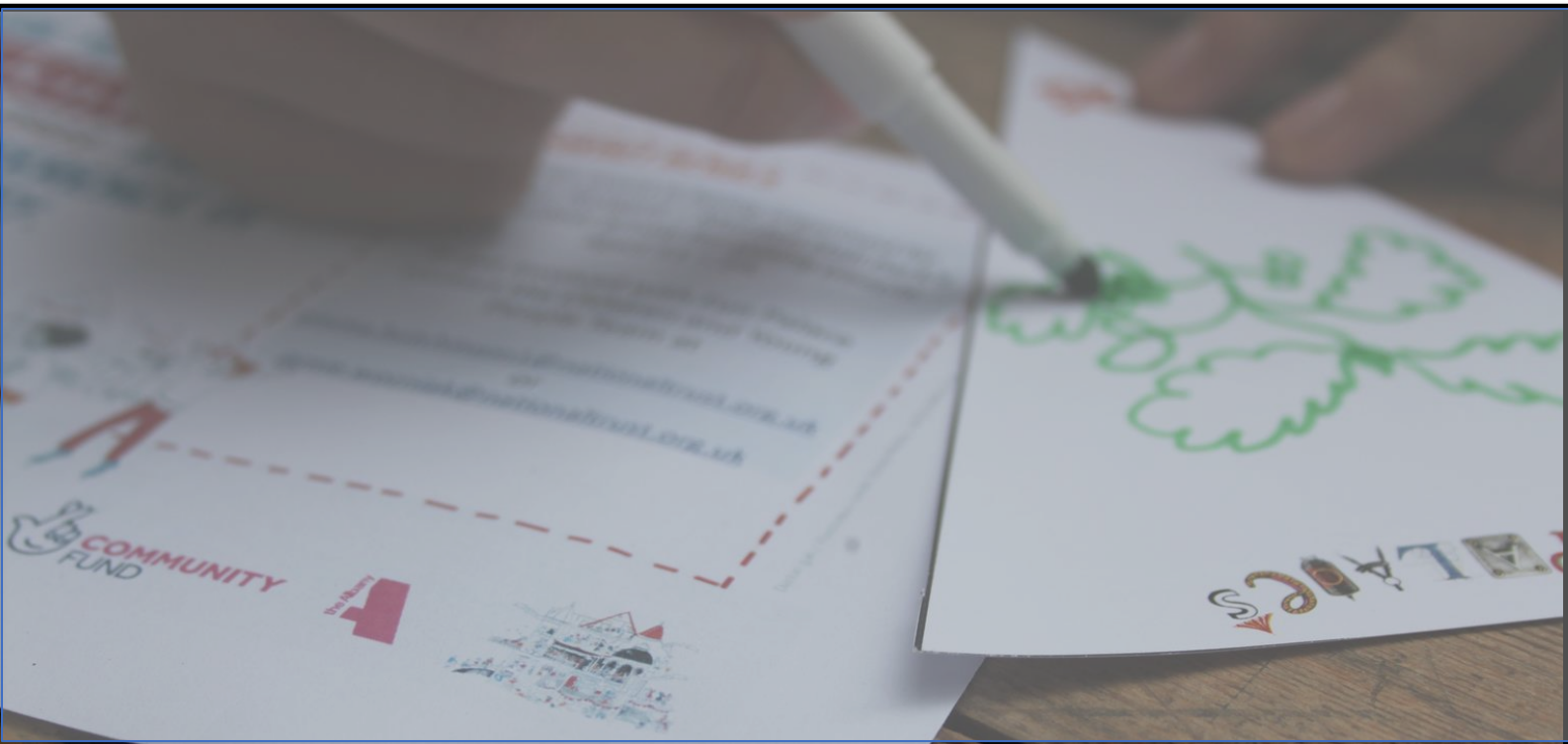
### Case studies

- 1.12. The Lines Between has produced four case studies which explore the carbon impact of individual Fun Palaces from the 2022 Annual Weekend. The Fun Palace events selected as case studies represent a geographic spread across the UK and feature Fun Palaces of different sizes, with varied settings and themes. The case studies discuss:
- The history and design of the event
  - Participation by the local community
  - Environmental impact; including detail on travel, waste and energy usage
  - Learnings for other/future events
- 1.13. Each case study concludes with an overall carbon impact rating.
- 1.14. The case studies were based on a series of interviews with Makers and attendees from each of the Fun Palaces. The Lines Between attended one of the case study Fun Palaces and conducted in-person fieldwork; the rest of the interviews were conducted online/over the phone. Two of the case studies are included in Chapter 3, which explores the carbon impact of the Fun Palaces Annual Weekend; the remaining two are included in Appendix 1.

## This report

- 1.15. The remainder of this report sets out findings from the carbon impact study. Quotes from interviews have been included throughout each chapter.





## 2. Fun Palaces sustainability approach

- 2.1. This chapter describes Fun Palaces' strategic approach to sustainability, including discussion of its environmental policies and activity around climate change.

### Climate policies

- 2.2. Sustainability is a key priority for the Fun Palaces leadership team, and significant efforts have been made to embed sustainable and eco-friendly practices into the organisation. In recent years, Fun Palaces has sought advice from sustainability experts and worked with external partners to reduce the carbon footprint of the organisation. A [Climate Pledge](#) has been published on the Fun Palaces website, along with a more detailed [Climate Policy](#).
- 2.3. These documents set out actions and measures which aim to minimise Fun Palaces' impact on the climate crisis, both during the Annual Weekend and through its organisational activity for the rest of the year. The Climate Policy includes commitments to minimise organisational electricity usage, maximise recycling, encourage low-carbon travel options, and use local supply chains when making purchases.
- 2.4. The Fun Palaces team shared examples of how the organisation's sustainability policies are actively embraced and applied into their working practice. For example, where travel to operational meetings is required, attendees can access funding which enables them to choose the most sustainable transport options.



*“When our Ambassadors are travelling, we encourage them not to fly. And that has been accounted for in our funding through the Land Travel fund. So they can have an extra day's work if it's going to take an extra day to come by train, or if they're getting the ferry from Northern Ireland, even though it's more expensive than flying, we've got the funding to pay for that.”*

- 2.5. In terms of food and drink, Fun Palaces do not impose restrictions (like meat-free or plant-based produce) on catering options for organisational events and meetings, but do encourage attendees to make more environmentally friendly choices. While it was recognised that vegan or vegetarian choices tend to have lower carbon, water and ecological footprints, there were concerns that placing strict rules in this regard would significantly limit choice for those with dietary requirements and intolerances.

#### **Climate change action**

- 2.6. Outwith organisational policies and protocols, Fun Palaces also dedicate time and resources to climate change action. For example, each year, Fun Palaces hosts a free carbon literacy and sustainability online workshop which offers guidance, information and ideas to support Makers to make their events as sustainable as possible.
- 2.7. The Fun Palaces team have also produced an online [Sustainability Toolkit](#) which contains practical advice on how to make cultural and community events as eco-friendly and low-carbon as possible, including guidance on what to do with leftover materials, links for sharing libraries and repair cafes and a sustainability checklist.
- 2.8. In addition, Fun Palaces has made an organisational commitment to support staff to access climate change and sustainability education. For example, one member of the team told us they had recently been to the London Culture and Climate Crisis Conference: Create for Tomorrow, where they attended seminars run by experts and activists and learned more about the role of the cultural sector in responding to the climate emergency.

#### **Organisational ethos**

- 2.9. Several interviewees reflected on how, in many ways, the ethos of Fun Palaces aligns closely with a move towards a more sustainable and eco-friendly culture. The ethos of the movement is about local communities celebrating the culture that already exists within them and making the most of what they have to hand, instead of travelling to the nearest big town or city, or buying new things.

“I really believe that when we keep culture local, and we're not travelling, and we're not flying in experts and using carbon heavy ways to engage with culture, that it's really good for the environment as kind of unexpected side effect of Fun Palaces.”

“I think their whole model is sustainable. They're all about bringing together people in local communities, participating with each other and sharing skills and expertise and time and resource and all of that.”

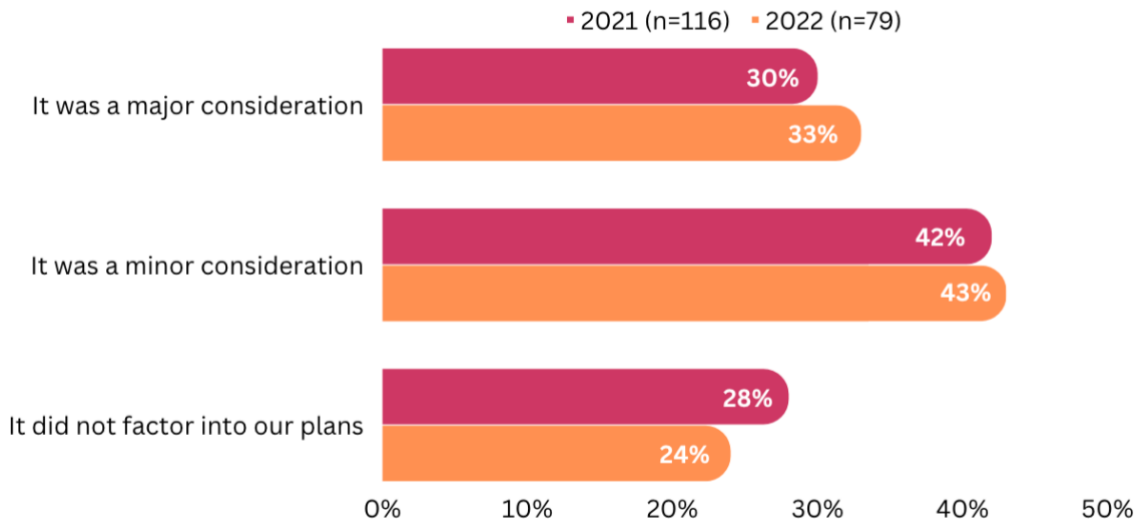
### 3. Carbon impact of Fun Palaces Annual Weekend

- 3.1. The 2022 Annual Weekend ran from Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September to Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, during which 174 Fun Palaces took place across the UK.
- 3.2. The following sections explore the overall carbon impact of the Annual Weekend; findings are presented under different aspects of events such as planning, travel, energy usage, resources and positive climate action.

#### Planning

- 3.3. Makers are encouraged to consider the environmental impact of their event during planning stages, and this appears to be the case for the majority of Fun Palaces.
- 3.4. Over three quarters (76%) of Makers who responded to the 2022 survey reported that sustainability and the environment were a factor in their planning; 33% said it was a major consideration, and 33% described it as a minor consideration. Figure 1 shows that these results are largely similar to the 2021 survey, although there is a slight increase in the proportion of Makers who considered the environment in their planning in 2022 than in 2021.

**Figure 1: To what extent did sustainability and the environment factor into the planning of your Fun Palace?**



- 3.5. These findings were echoed in interviews with stakeholders; greater awareness of climate issues among Makers, and a cultural shift towards more environmentally friendly ways had been observed in recent years.



*“The majority of the organisations I'm speaking to are arts organisations, and small, voluntary community groups whose focus is often very much about sustainability. That theme comes up time and time again. A lot of community work really has that at its heart... The majority of folk who are involved in Fun Palaces are already of that mindset and are already advocating for that change.”*



- 3.6. Most comments about the steps taken in advance to reduce the environmental impact of Fun Palaces related to resources; for example, taking inventory of existing materials in the lead up to events instead of just purchasing new items. Such measures are discussed in more detail under the ‘resources and materials’ sub-heading.
- 3.7. A few Makers noted that they are committed to reducing the environmental impact of future Fun Palaces; one had already undertaken a reflective workshop evaluating the carbon impact of the 2022 event, and had brainstormed some ideas of what they plan to do differently next year.

### Travel

- 3.8. There was wide agreement among those who participated in the research that Fun Palaces are mostly attended by local people.



*“Fun Palaces have always been about celebrating the culture we have right here on our doorsteps. It’s about saying we don’t need to travel to big cities to experience culture, and we don’t need to fly in experts.”<sup>1</sup>*

- 3.9. In addition, Fun Palaces are often delivered in conjunction with other events (e.g. free museum days) or happen in or close to popular public spaces (e.g. local parks), and therefore people would have been visiting the venues even if the Fun Palace was not taking place.



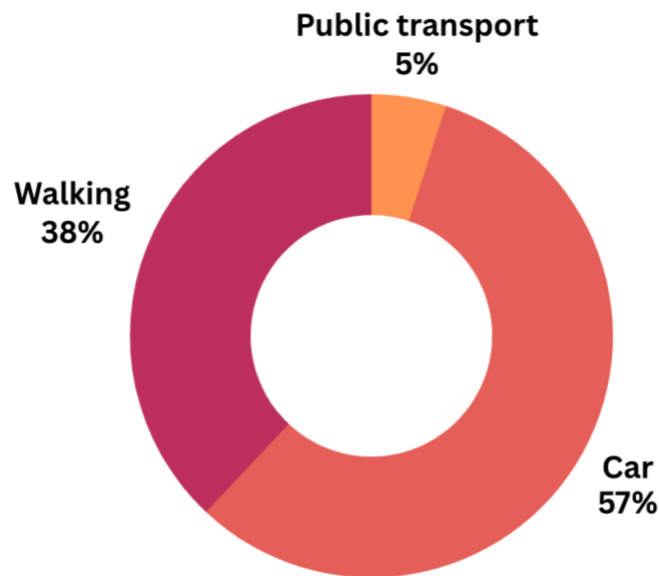
*“A lot of the ones I visit are very low carbon impact. A lot of people come locally. One that I went to, people hadn’t even gone there to go to the Fun Palace. It was near a swimming pool and they’d been going to the swimming pool, and had seen the Fun Palace so there was no carbon impact attached to that because it had collided with their day. The Fun Palace hadn’t actually made them go out.”*

- 3.10. Makers also have the option of hosting online events, which negates the need for any travel. However, it is important to note that of the survey sample, only a handful of events took place online (4%, 4) or on a hybrid basis (2%, 2).
- 3.11. In terms of mode of travel to in-person events, while some attendees travelled by active or sustainable transport options such as walking, cycling and public transport, over half of those who responded to the participant survey travelled by car (Figure 2). The median distance driven was a short journey of just over 3 miles. However, this is simply a snapshot of attendees at Fun Palaces and may not represent the full picture of journeys taken and travel to the events.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an excerpt from a Fun Palaces blog: <https://funpalaces.co.uk/fun-palaces-sustainability-and-local-culture/>

**Figure 2: How did you travel here today? (n=134)**



### Resources and materials

- 3.12. Makers are encouraged to make use of the items and resources they have, or those that can be borrowed from others. Interviews and survey responses confirmed that many Makers used items left over from previous activities, or use reclaimed or recycled items in their activities to minimise the new materials they have to buy. This included materials that would otherwise have gone to waste, for example, using cardboard packaging for craft activities and making cushions from old wool. Similarly, some activities featured items found in nature, such as acorns and driftwood.

“*It's never been about, buy more, sell more, you know? It's fundamentally regenerative in its approach. It's like, what do you have within you that you would share?*”

- 3.13. Another common theme from interviews and survey responses was around sourcing reusable items. If supplies had to be bought, many Makers ensured they could be used again – for example, some bought art supplies, but let participants take them home, others used porcelain crockery and glasses to serve food and drink rather than single-use plastic containers, and another produced a banner announcing the event on the first Saturday in October, without a specific date, so it can be used again in future years.

“*They did buy some glass painting sticks for people to use, but she's now set up a regular art group, and she's still using them.*”

- 3.14. Many Makers noted that where items could not be re-used, they opted for recyclable materials, for example, printing promotional flyers and posters on recyclable paper. A few described limiting the amount of paper altogether by creating digital marketing materials and using social media to promote the event instead of physical materials.

3.15. Sharing resources is also a key feature of the Fun Palaces Annual Weekend.



*“I did one based in our community garden where we swapped packets of seeds. It was just seeds that we all had left over from our gardens, like, ‘I’ve planted half my packet of peas, there’s the other half - does anyone want the other half?’ They always feel that ethos - it’s about ‘what do we already have and what can we share? I think it would be really hard to think of an example of a Fun Palace that didn’t encapsulate that, because that is what a Fun Palace is, right? It’s not about producing new stuff, it’s not about buying stuff; it’s about sharing. And I think that sharing ethos is the most environmental thing.”*

3.16. Where goods were purchased for events, efforts were often made to recycle packaging. One Maker felt that by running their Fun Palace, they actually negated waste that would have been produced if the event hadn’t been taking place.



*“There was almost no rubbish at all, and definitely less than if there was no Fun Palace going on, because it takes up quite a lot of space in the park and generally, people would be sitting with picnics and producing a lot of rubbish.”*

### Energy & water usage

3.17. The energy and water usage that can be attributed to the Fun Palaces Annual Weekend is estimated as being low. A significant proportion of Fun Palaces take place either:

- outdoors, where there is no electric heating and lighting, and few gas alternatives
- in public buildings, where the venue’s facilities are likely to have been open and operational even if the Fun Palace were not taking place. In addition, most public bodies, including local authorities and National Trust, have climate and sustainability policies in place, and ensure their venues adhere to energy saving and eco-friendly practices.

3.18. There are, of course, some ways in which Fun Palaces increase water and energy usage, for example, through activities which require electricity, running water for washing up, and heating and lighting in some indoor venues. However, these surpluses are often mitigated; for example, some of the Makers consulted in the study noted that when they serve tea and coffee, they use canteen-style hot-water containers which reduce the number of times kettles would need to be filled and re-heated.

3.19. The case study presented overleaf features the ‘Fun on a Friday with Newbattle Memories group Fun Palace’. It is an example of a Fun Palace with a low environmental impact as it took place in a public building; a local library which operates as a council-run ‘warm and well’ hub.

**Environmental impact case study**

**Fun on a Friday with Newbattle Memories group**

**Date:** Friday 30th September 2022

**Time:** 10:30-12:30

**Location:** Dalkeith, Midlothian

**Attendance:** 10

**Event summary:** A social gathering of members of the local community with games, songs, poems and memories shared over tea, coffee and cake.



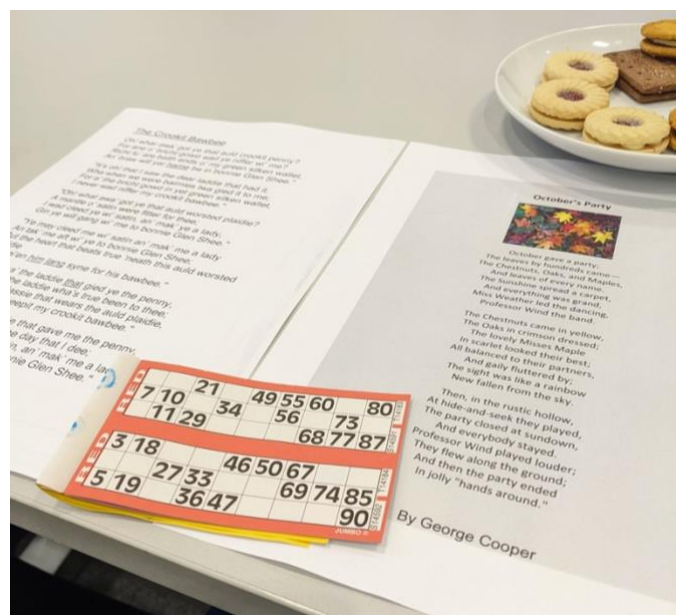
**Background**

The Newbattle Memories Group is a local reminiscence group which meets every Friday morning in Newbattle Library. Librarian Jacqueline Elliot established the group a few years ago when the library moved to a new premises.

*“We really wanted to promote the library as a shared facility for everybody in the community, and particularly for people that were isolated, so we started the group in January 2019. We wanted to make it a social group based on reminiscence. In some ways we just wanted to brighten up people’s lives.”*

The group is made up of around 10 members of the local community, the majority of whom are retired. During their weekly sessions, the group share stories from their lives, play games and celebrate Scottish heritage, art and culture.

*“The group is very informal. We do quizzes, we sing, we do poetry, and obviously we have a cup of tea and biscuits. It lasts a couple of hours, and it’s just something that stimulates their minds and gives them a couple hours out of the house where they’re meeting other people and having fun.”*



### **The Fun Palaces Weekend**

2022 was the first year that the group took part in the Fun Palaces Weekend. Jacqueline heard about Fun Palaces through a colleague, and decided to sign up for the annual weekend because she felt it was a good fit with the ethos of the Newbattle Memories Group.

*“[My colleague] sent an email asking if anyone would be interested in doing a Fun Palace, and I thought, 'what's this?', because I wasn't totally aware of the concept. But when I read about Fun Palaces, I thought, that's actually very much what we do, our group totally ticks all the boxes for it. And anything that raises awareness of community and environmental issues is really worth doing and is so valuable.”*

Jacqueline also thought that taking part in the Fun Palaces Weekend would be a good way of promoting the group to the local community.

*“I thought we could tap into the whole Fun Palaces movement and that might be an opportunity to encourage even more people to come along, and highlight the benefits of the work that we do and the group that we've set up.”*

### **Environmental considerations**

The following sub-sections consider the environmental footprint of the event, exploring aspects like travel to the event, energy usage and supplies and resources used.

#### **Travel**

There is very low mileage associated with attending the group, as members all live nearby and only a few travel by car. Several bus routes are available within a short walk from the library.

*“The group are all fairly local. Some people come by bus, some people walk, some people come by car, but they usually carshare. There's a couple of members that have got cars and they take the rest of them home.”*

#### **Energy usage**

The library itself is one of Midlothian Council's 'warm and well' hubs where members of the public are welcome to spend time in the space to keep warm. As such, the library's heating and lighting remain on during opening hours regardless of any additional events or groups taking place in the space, which means that very little additional energy use can be attributed to this Fun Palace.

The group in fact saves the 10 members of the group from heating and lighting their own individual properties for a few hours while they assemble on a Friday morning.



### Venue

The event took place in the conference room of Newbattle Library.

The library itself is situated within Newbattle Community Campus, a £38 million state-of-the-art community hub located in Dalkeith, Midlothian. When the site opened in 2018, Midlothian Council deputy leader, Councillor Jim Muirhead was vocal in his admiration for the venue, saying: "This is an amazing, modern building that will benefit local people for decades to come". The building has since won architectural awards for its design and use of technology.



Midlothian Council, who run the library service have made organisational commitments to promoting the use of sustainable energy solutions, and low and zero-carbon technologies within their venues.

### Supplies and resources

Some supplies and resources were purchased or produced for the event; these included equipment for games on the day (bingo cards and pens) and print-outs of songs and poems. However, these will be used again in future group sessions, rather than thrown away.

The local knitting club had recently donated some seat covers for the group just prior to the Fun Palace, which were woven using recyclable materials.

### Waste

The library has access to recycling facilities, so very little non-recyclable waste was created.

### Catering

Hot water for tea and coffee was stored in catering-style canteens which reduced the number of times electric kettles would need to be filled and reheated.

A few supermarket-bought packets of biscuits were purchased and consumed at the event. One member of the group brought in a cake she'd baked at home to share with the others.

### Raising awareness

While sustainability and the environment are not the underlying themes of the group, such topics often come up organically during discussions.

*“The whole question about problems with the environment and the effects on fuel costs, that's raised every week. So there is an awareness. And I suppose the fact that older people are more isolated, so when they've got a chance to get together, they will talk about things that perhaps they wouldn't normally, so it is raising awareness really. And obviously, it gives them a chance to discuss how they lived as children and what they had to put up with that kids nowadays wouldn't. They wouldn't have heating in the house so they talk about wearing more clothes and all this kind of stuff.”*

Another example of this knowledge exchange during the Fun Palace was a member of the group asking for advice on how to deal with the surplus of apples growing from their apple tree to avoid wastage – suggestions included sharing the excess fruit with neighbours and making and freezing apple-based deserts like apple cake.

### **Overall carbon impact assessment**

It is difficult to isolate any additional negative carbon impact created by 'Fun on a Friday with Newbattle Memories group' Fun Palace. It was not a one-off event, but rather a weekly edition of their club run in association with the Fun Palaces Annual Weekend.

**Conclusion: Low environmental impact**

### Promoting positive climate action

- 3.20. Just over a third of Makers (34%) who responded to the 2022 survey said their Fun Palace focused specifically on environmental issues; an increase compared with 25% in 2021. Examples of such Fun Palaces in 2022 included craft sessions to repurpose old objects, litter removal and information and awareness sessions about climate change.



*“I went to a Fun Palace that was all about recycling and repurposing. They got hold of all these shoes that would have gone to landfill and they used them as an arts activity. Like, ‘come and decorate a shoe and take it home’. And they had a basket of pears that were from a local orchard that they rescued as windfalls. Everything they did had a sustainable thought to it. The whole purpose of that Fun Palace was to bring something that's broken, and repurpose it into something new that you can take home. My friend took an old playsuit that had a rip in it and turned it into cushions.”*

- 3.21. More widely, a common theme which emerged in the research was the potential of community-led movements in building resilience and mobilising action around different causes, including climate change action and advocacy. Participants in the study reflected on the important role that Fun Palaces can play in influencing change, promoting sustainable practices and instilling positive environmental behaviours in communities.



*“Sustainability is really about influencing others and taking them on a journey... They absolutely do have the power to influence others and drive change.”*



*“The interesting thing about communities and climate is how we can support people to think more broadly about the world. There's real potential for positive climate action and doing something really meaningful about the climate by bringing people together.”*

- 3.22. For example, in recent years Fun Palaces has challenged stigma around second-hand clothing, promoted repair, recycling and reuse and encouraged change around consumption patterns.
- 3.23. The case study presented overleaf is about Morden Hall Park Fun Palace; it is an example of a Fun Palace which embraced a nature-based theme and promoted sustainable activities and behaviours to attendees.

## Environmental impact case study

### Morden Hall Park Fun Palace

**Date:** Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2022

**Time:** 11:00-16:00

**Location:** Morden, Greater London

**Attendance:** est. 500-1000

**Event summary:** An outdoor event at Morden Hall Park hosted by the Urban Rangers, a group of young volunteers who work on local environmental conservation projects.



#### Background

Morden Hall Park Fun Palace was organised by the local Urban Rangers group, with support from a Community Ranger at the National Trust. The Urban Rangers are a diverse group of volunteers aged 11 to 24 with a shared interest in the outdoors and nature-based activities.

The group meets twice a month to work on environmental conservation and habitat management projects in Morden Hall Park, a National Trust Park on the banks of the River Wandle in South London.

*“It’s an open volunteering group; anyone can join, it’s free. We meet every other Sunday for 3 hours, and we have between eight and 15 people turn up for each session.”*

*“We do nature-based conservation type projects around the park, for example, we might go into the river and clear some pennyworts; we’ve been in some of the wooded areas, making paths and glades; and we do gardening activities like cutting grass with scythes. All those types of habitat management jobs around the park.”*





### The Fun Palaces Weekend

The Urban Rangers group has hosted a few Fun Palaces in the past, but decided not to participate in the Annual Weekend in 2020 or 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a few members of the group were eager to reintroduce Fun Palaces to their programme of activities in 2022.

After weeks of planning, the Urban Rangers hosted their Fun Palace in the centre of Morden Hall Park, where a variety of nature-based activities such as outdoor skills workshops and games were offered throughout the day, led by the Urban Rangers and volunteers from the community.

*“One of the most popular things was the fire-lighting and popcorn-making. They were showing people how to use a flint and steel to get a spark and light a fire, and then showed them how to make popcorn over the fire. We had apple press juicing, we had Frisbee sessions. There was just lots of nice conversations and connections and partnerships started. The young people really enjoyed it.”*

*“It was a good mix of sports and nature and wellbeing and arts and crafts activities. And generally, they were all nature-themed because we're trying to keep it in line with the National Trust.”*

The event was described as a huge success, with an estimated footfall of between 500-1000 visitors.





### Environmental considerations

The following sub-sections consider the environmental footprint of the event, exploring aspects like travel, energy usage and supplies and resources used.

#### Travel

Visitors used different travel options to get to the event. Most attendees came from the local area, and walked or took public transport.

*“Mainly local people, I don't think we had anyone who commuted very far. And because it is in a city, they generally just take the bus or walk, or the tube; Morden is the last stop of the London Underground on the Northern Line.”*

*“We're also on the tram line and bus routes. So it was a mixture of public transport, people walking, but there were also a lot of cars in the carpark. I can't say whether they came specifically for the event, but the carpark was full by the end of the day. But, we don't have a massive car park, and we do encourage people to come by public transport.”*

Cars were used to transport equipment to the event, but organisers sought to limit how many journeys were made.

*“Even the volunteers, when they were bringing in their own stuff, they had quite a lot of tables and chairs and loads of instruments, but they did tend to carpool. So multiple people would come together, or only one person would drive the car and the rest of them would come by underground.”*

#### Venue/Energy usage

The event took place outdoors at Morden Hall Park; activities required little to no energy use.

#### Supplies and resources

Some supplies and resources were bought or produced specifically for the event. For example:

- While most promotion was done online, some posters were printed to advertise the Fun Palace to the local community.
- Paper passports were printed and handed out so that people could have a record of their attendance at the event and the stations they visited.
- Some single use plastic cups were purchased.

However, minimising the use of single use plastics and non-recyclable materials was a priority for the Urban Rangers.

*“I was talking to one of the people who was going to be doing something on the day, and she was like, 'I'll get some plastic takeaway containers' and I was like, 'No! I think we have some, but they're recycled ones.' So it's like you know, just thinking about things like that.”*

*“We wanted to do these passports that are given to people when they come and it shows what's going on. And previously, they've given out stickers to add to these passports when people go to a station. But this year, they decided to do a stamp instead. So it was a bit of willow wood from the park with a bit of foam, and then an ink pad. So they decided to do this to be more environmentally friendly than using stickers.”*

*“I was really impressed by some of the young people saying, 'we don't need to buy badges and stickers - that's just unnecessary plastic waste.' We also printed the booklets to be smaller and on recyclable paper. But we still had a few on the sort of normal white paper, because that's important for some types of vision impairments. We have a big emphasis on accessibility of all kinds.”*



**The willow wood stamp used as an alternative to stickers**

### Waste

Where possible, the team recycled all waste, but there were some exceptions; and with an event of this size, a small amount of waste from visitors was unavoidable.

*“We do recycle. We recycled the unused paper passports. But we had to use plastic cups for the popcorn. We tried to look for paper ones but we couldn't find them. And I was like, 'okay, it's not ideal, but we'll recycle them.' But unfortunately, we only had normal bins so they didn't get recycled. But that's probably all the waste that we produced. A lot of stuff would have been things we have anyway and we would reuse them.”*

### Catering

Some activities were food-based, for example there was apple-pressing, popcorn making and a doughnut eating contest. The Urban Rangers used local suppliers and incorporated sustainable catering options.

*“The apples were picked from the park because we have an orchard, so they were all windfall ones or ones that our gardener picked. So they had very little carbon footprint. The doughnuts were donated from Greggs in town, so someone went to pick them up on foot and brought them back. And then the popcorn was just bought from a local shop, like the un-popped popcorn kernels basically.”*

### Climate-positive activity

Some of the activities at the Morden Hall Park Fun Palace were linked to climate change, sustainability or environmental issues. A local beekeeper held a workshop about beekeeping, and there was a gardening station, where attendees were shown how to propagate plants and given information about peat-free compost and sowing seeds.

In addition, a local costume maker and textile artist volunteered to run a station teaching people the basics of sewing. The materials she brought were scraps sourced during river cleans of the Wandle.

*“She gets materials like old bits of clothes and things that have been thrown into the river and then uses them in art projects. So she had a stall there using little scraps of material that she'd rescued from the river and cleaned.”*

The artist, Elly, gave more insight into the ethos behind her workshop at the event.

*“I like teaching really simple mending or sewing workshops. I try to do these workshops for free whenever I can because it was a skill that I got to learn for free from my mum and my grandmother. And I think for a lot of people, there's a perception that sewing is something where you need to spend a lot of money to get started, like you need a sewing machine, you need all this fancy kit, you need all these expensive materials. So I like to show people that all you really need is a needle, some thread, a pair of scissors, and a pile of scrap fabric, and you can create something quite exciting.”*

Part of the inspiration behind her workshop was to make people value their own clothes more, give them the skills to repair fabrics instead of discarding them, and think twice about mass consumption and fast fashion.

*“I think it gives people more respect for their clothes, because once you know about the skill of sewing and you start to get an idea of how long it takes to sew something, thinking 'oh, a person made my T shirt, and I paid a pound for it', you start to think, well, I know how long it takes to make something. Is that fair? Should they have been paid, 50p an hour to make this garment for me?”*

*“It's an important subject to learn about, because rather than constantly being sucked into this kind of cult of always feeling like you need something new, always feeling dissatisfied in the clothes that you have, when you learn the skills of making, mending and embellishing, you can start to really love your clothes. And then you'll want to wear them for longer, and then you start to opt out of that fast fashion system because you're more conscious about what you're buying.”*



### **Overall carbon impact assessment**

While some waste was created, this Fun Palace took place outdoors, meaning there was little to no energy usage. Most attendees were from the local area, and some of the activities on offer may have had a positive impact in terms of encouraging climate-friendly behaviours among the attendees.

**Conclusion: Low environmental impact**

### **Reducing environmental impact of future Fun Palaces**

- 3.24. Participants in the study were asked to consider ways in which the environmental impact of Fun Palaces could be reduced in the future. Suggestions included:
- Promoting active and sustainable travel options, for example, by pointing out cycle paths and public transport options on promotional materials;
  - Disincentivising car travel to public venues by limiting car park access (e.g. blocking off space by holding events there);
  - Reducing printing and the amount of paper used by implementing digital approaches to promote events;
  - Using more sustainable or local supplies and suppliers;
  - More online or hybrid events;
  - Investigating carbon off-setting schemes.
- 3.25. Makers noted that they would appreciate more resources, guidance and ideas from Fun Palaces to help reduce their carbon impact. Specific suggestions included: support with promoting their events without printing materials, ideas for simple, low carbon impact events, and guidance on accessing affordable sustainable materials and supplies.
- 3.26. There were a few calls for more networking opportunities to engage with, and learn from, other Makers.
- 3.27. There are potentially some existing solutions to these suggestions; the Fun Palaces Sustainability Toolkit offers some practical advice in relation to some of the points raised above, and the annual workshop offers Makers the chance to learn from one another. Considerations could be made for how to best promote these resources to Makers.

### **Overview of the carbon impact of Fun Palaces Annual Weekend**

The majority of those who took part in the study considered the overall carbon impact of the Fun Palaces Annual Weekend to be low. There was broad agreement that the emissions which can be attributed to the Fun Palaces Weekend are minimal, for the following reasons:

- Fun Palaces are mainly attended by local people, which means the mileage/carbon footprint associated with travelling to events is low. In addition, Fun Palaces are often delivered in conjunction with other events (e.g. free museum days) or happen in popular public spaces (e.g. local parks), and therefore people would have been visiting venues even if the Fun Palace was not taking place.
- Many of the events take place in public buildings (e.g. libraries) which would have been open on the day of the event anyway, so there would be little additional energy use that could be attributed to the Fun Palace. A significant portion also take place outside, where there is very little or no energy usage.
- There is an ethos of sharing, and “making the most of what we have” among Makers and Ambassadors, so very few things are purchased solely for Fun Palaces, and there is very little wasted or not reused after the event.

Participants in the study reflected on the important role that Fun Palaces can play in influencing change, promoting sustainable practices and instilling positive environmental behaviours in communities.



## 4. Barriers to maximising sustainability

- 4.1. This chapter sets out some of the barriers that Fun Palaces face in minimising the carbon impact of the Annual Weekend and its wider operations.

### Engaging people on climate change

- 4.2. Ambassadors discussed some of the challenges they face in motivating Makers and the wider public to engage in more environmentally conscious event planning and participation. This finding was also reflected in the survey responses; 24% of Makers who responded to the survey in 2022 said that sustainability and the environment were not a consideration in the planning of their event.
- 4.3. A few interviewees raised concerns about pressuring Makers to consider the sustainability of their event, fearing it is an additional burden which could potentially make them reluctant to engage.

“*It's a tough one... Makers are doing it for free in their own time. People might be a bit like, 'Oh, well, I don't do anything to do with sustainability, so I can't join in.' It's just like it's putting an extra thing onto somebody. I don't want to put anyone off.*”

- 4.4. Others noted that, given the current economic climate and ongoing cost of living crisis, adapting behaviour to mitigate climate change is not always the most pressing priority for individuals, public services and community/voluntary organisations.
- 4.5. Some interviewees also reflected on the limitations of what they can control, expressing that, while they can encourage and promote more sustainable approaches, ultimately, they cannot fully influence or control other people's behaviour.

“*I do send emails to the venues, and they know about the Fun Palaces' aims and objectives about sustainability, but I'm not in control of what the venue say to the Makers.*”

- 4.6. This sentiment was also a prevalent theme in responses to the survey of Makers, who noted that they can encourage participants to use low carbon transport options, but they have no control over how people travel to the event.
- 4.7. A few Ambassadors representing more rural areas explained that a lack of public transport infrastructure can mean people have no option but to drive if they wish to attend Fun Palaces.

“*It's fairly accepted across the board here in the Highlands that infrastructure is a problem. And I would always cite that as being the number one barrier to sustainability in this area.*”

## Travel

- 4.8. Each quarter, Fun Palaces host an in-person Action Research meeting to discuss operational matters, which is attended by the entire team. While Fun Palaces' headquarters are in London, Ambassadors work on a regional basis and are based in towns and cities all over the UK, including Belfast, Bristol, Inverness, and Rotherham. Extensive travel is therefore required for some members of the team, and while (as noted in Chapter 2) funding is available for attendees to travel in the most eco-friendly way possible, concerns were raised about the other carbon impacts these trips may contribute to, for example, several nights staying in a hotel.



*“The travel aspect of it, even though it's by train, the hotel stays, all those towels being washed... It's not a very environmentally friendly business, hotel stays. I find that a bit difficult... Four times a year seems a bit excessive, particularly when you've got somebody coming from Northern Ireland, one from Inverness, Cornwall, London, you know, spread out all over the place.”*

- 4.9. The value of in-person meetings was recognised, and there was no desire among participants for such events to be entirely replaced by online conferences; however it was suggested that meetings could be held less frequently, with smaller online interim meetings organised where necessary.



## 5. Conclusions

- 5.1. Throughout this study, Fun Palaces' commitment to sustainability and lowering the carbon footprint of its campaign has been abundantly clear. It also has plans to continue investing time and resources into climate action in the future.
- 5.2. Of course, there are some emissions associated with the Fun Palaces Annual Weekend; as a hugely popular, national festival of events, it is inevitable that waste will be created, energy will be used and miles will be driven.
- 5.3. However, this study has produced findings which indicate that the overall carbon impact of the Fun Palaces Annual Weekend is low; Makers largely make use of existing resources and focus on community engagement at a local level, meaning participants do not have to travel far to attend.
- 5.4. What's more, the campaign's reach and influence drives conversation and education around climate change action, mobilising communities to work together, share resources and adopt more sustainable behaviours.



*"I've worked in events for a long time, and the sort of events that I'm used to working on are larger scale festivals. It always amazes me what the carbon footprint of these big events must be, when you see countless vans and lorries and vehicles and all sorts of things rocking up, and generators running for a couple of weeks at a time, and huge amounts of waste. And when you compare that to Fun Palaces, the sort of events that we're talking about, it's an absolute drop in the ocean. Relatively speaking, Fun Palace events are very, very low carbon compared to a lot of other events. It could always improve, but I mean, I don't recall seeing any Fun Palaces that have really required anyone to even drive a vehicle. It's very much about what folk can do immediately in the local area with the things that they already have. It's not about buying new things and travelling long distances. It all feels very homemade."*

## Appendix 1: Additional case studies

### Environmental impact case study

#### Portrush Makers Fun Palace

**Date:** Sunday 2nd October 2022

**Time:** 14:00-17:00

**Location:** Portrush, County Antrim

**Attendance:** est. 250

**Event summary:** Craft activities, storytelling, poetry, music and other entertainment with a theme of caring for the environment. Attended predominantly by young families.



#### Background

Portrush Makers Fun Palace was part of Swell Portrush 2022, an annual volunteer-led festival in Portrush in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. Local artists and businesses organise creative and cultural activities related to the area's coastal location and with a focus on caring for the environment.

*"Portrush tends to attract creative people and people who enjoy the environment... What I'm interested in is connecting those people and seeing what can come out of those connections in terms of strengthening our voice as a community for what we want the future of Portrush to be."*



#### The Fun Palaces Weekend

2022 was the second year Swell Portrush has included a Fun Palace. Gemma Reid, one of the event's organisers, explained they took part because Fun Palaces' focus on creative and environmental activities reflects Swell Portrush's aims.



*“The reason why Fun Palaces appealed to us is that the ethos and work Fun Palaces is trying to do align really closely with what the Festival is trying to do, which is to bring people together around creative skills, cultural skills, and caring for the environment.”*

Activities at the Fun Palace were wide-ranging, including crafts, musicians, storytelling, drawing and poetry.

*“We had a whole host of stuff going on. We had some craft activities, making little jellyfish with clay and textiles. We had a woman who runs an eco-art business who brought loads of cardboard and natural pigment paints for kids to paint and make their own creations with. We had a magician, we had a musician, we had a local storyteller. And we had a collaboration between an artist who runs a T-shirt Company who is really keen to get people drawing, and Pub Poetry, a small community organisation who wanted to get people to write haikus.”*

Gemma noted the Fun Palace enabled the Festival to include an event for younger families.

*“I think the Fun Palace is a good way to make sure there's a totally accessible, family-friendly event in our programme for younger families.”*

### **Environmental considerations**

The following sub-sections consider the event's environmental footprint, exploring aspects like travel to the event, energy usage and supplies and resources used.

#### **Venue**

An events space, well-known locally, provided its venue for free. Just outside the town centre, it consists of several small cabins, all covered with a marquee-style canvas roof.





### Travel

Most attendees lived locally, but Gemma estimated around 80% drove to the event. Public transport is limited, so driving was more convenient than walking for participants, most of whom were families with young children.

*“One of the things we were aware of was that a lot of people would have travelled to the venue by car. Unfortunately, I'm not sure what to do about that. We're so dependent on cars here. There's no decent public transport system... The venue is close to a lot of residential properties, but would maybe be a half-hour walk for a lot of people to get there at least. So when you have little children, I think people just tend to jump in their car because that's easier.”*

Organisers are considering a more central venue for future events, which might encourage more people to walk.

*“The thing we're thinking about at the minute is holding it in a different venue, in the town centre for different reasons than environmental impact, but that might make it more walkable.”*

### Energy usage

The venue has no natural light, so electric lights were used. The heating was also switched on.

*“It would be really dark otherwise; there's no natural light in the venue... (and) the heaters are not environmentally friendly, I would imagine.”*

### Supplies and resources

Organisers bought clay, pens and paper, but local people donated used textiles and cardboard. In addition, the paints used were made with natural ingredients.

*“The textiles and all the cardboard for making stuff was reclaimed. (The paints are made) with totally natural pigments... they are all non-toxic, no bad chemicals in them.”*

Organisers produced no paper promotional materials; instead, they used online methods.

### Waste

The event organisers were keen to minimise the waste produced.

*“I think our other facilitators were aware that we wanted to minimise the amount of rubbish we were creating.”*

However, the number of attendees posed a challenge. Around 250 people attended, many more than the 20 to 30 expected. Due to the larger numbers, the venue opened the bar and

served food and drinks in disposable takeaway containers. There were no recycling bins, but the event team separated recyclable and landfill waste. This was a valuable lesson for the organisers, who aim to avoid single-use plastic in future.

*“Next time, I would try and be more conscious of that single-use plastic, disposable stuff and try and avoid that.”*

### Catering

The produce available at the bar included locally-brewed beer and other items from local wholesalers. Gemma observed few people were drinking bottled water, but most were drinking tap water from the bar instead.

*“I think most people would have been just getting tap water from the bar rather than bottles. So that was good.”*

### **Overall carbon impact assessment**

Swell Portrush encourages local people to appreciate and protect the environment they live in. The Fun Palace contributed to this aim, but it is too early to identify its impact on the local community.

Organisers considered the environment when planning the event and used environmentally friendly supplies wherever possible. Promotional materials were digital, with no paper copies.

Elements outside the organisers’ control affected the event’s environmental impact, including many attendees driving to the venue. Food and drink was served in disposable containers, but the team separated recyclable waste and has learned lessons for future events.

**Conclusion: Medium environmental impact**

## Environmental impact case study

### Campsea Ashe Fun Palace

**Date:** Saturday 1st October 2022

**Time:** 14:00-17:00

**Location:** Campsea Ashe, Suffolk

**Attendance:** 15

**Event summary:** Arts, crafts and activities on the theme of 'Colours of Nature'.



#### Background

The Fun Palace in Campsea Ashe, a village in Suffolk, was initiated by an individual, Kate Hayward. Other villagers supported Kate to plan and deliver the Fun Palace.

#### The Fun Palaces Weekend

Kate had seen other Fun Palaces and thought it would work well in the village.

*"I love the concept of sharing skills and community engagement."*

2022 was the second Fun Palace in Campsea Ashe. Activities included making mini gardens, tree decorations, matchbox natural history museums, collages with leaves, and models with acorns and conkers.

*"It's just trying to get the kids to appreciate being outside and the families to spend time outside."*

#### Environmental considerations

The following sub-sections consider the event's environmental footprint, exploring aspects like travel to the event, energy usage and supplies and resources used.



### Travel

Most people walked to the event. A train strike may have limited the number of attendees from neighbouring villages.

### Venue

Campsea Ashe Victory Village Hall, built in 1947, hosted the Fun Palace. Activities took place inside the hall, on picnic tables outside and in the community garden next to the hall.



### Energy usage

The weather was pleasant, so there was no need for lighting or heating in the venue.

*"We didn't use any lighting or heating."*

### Supplies and resources

Kate bought posca pens for drawing on conkers, but other materials were either re-used, available in nature, or left over from previous events. For example, Kate and other volunteers donated cardboard and surplus wool from knitting projects; leaves, conkers and acorns were collected from local woodland; and matchboxes and double-sided tape were left over from previous events.

*"Well, it was just cardboard, like Amazon packaging."*

The village café, shop and pub displayed promotional posters. Volunteers printed flyers and distributed these to 60 local homes. Four flyers were printed per A4 sheet, using around 15 sheets of paper.

*“It wasn't a huge amount of paper.”*

### Catering

Tea, coffee and squash were available. A kettle was used to boil water for the hot drinks, and hot water from the boiler was required to wash cups.

### Waste

Organisers recycled paper and cardboard and placed natural items such as conkers, leaves and acorns in hedgerows. There was no plastic waste. Tea bags were put into landfill.

### **Overall carbon impact assessment**

Campsea Ashe Fun Palace made good use of recycled materials and natural items like conkers, leaves and acorns. Nearly all waste produced was recycled and the event used no heating or lighting.

**Conclusion: Low environmental impact**