



# Making the case for Carbon Literacy in museums

The Carbon Literacy Project has developed a free-to-access Toolkit for museums or sector organisations to train their staff. This document provides some initial guidance and materials to assist you in pitching Carbon Literacy to leadership and management within your museum or sector organisation.

## Contents

1. What is Carbon Literacy? .....	2
2. Why Carbon Literacy in museums? .....	2
3. What will your staff gain from the training? .....	3
4. The role of museums in taking climate action .....	4
5. Beyond climate .....	4
6. The financial case for Carbon Literacy .....	5
7. The social case for Carbon Literacy .....	5
8. The co-benefits of climate action .....	6
9. How can training be rolled out in your museum? .....	6
10. What do people think about the Toolkit? .....	8
11. What could be perceived as barriers? .....	9
12. FAQ .....	10
13. Sign up for our museums newsletter .....	12
14. Want to find out more? Please get in touch .....	12

## 1. What is Carbon Literacy?

Carbon Literacy provides learners with “an awareness of the carbon dioxide costs and impacts of everyday activities and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis.”

The United Nations recognised The Carbon Literacy Project at the COP21 climate negotiations in 2015 as one of 100 “Transformative Actions Projects” worldwide that could materially change how we deal with climate change.

Learners who successfully complete a day’s worth of approved Carbon Literacy learning are certified as Carbon Literate. As part of Carbon Literacy, participants must complete an Action Plan where they commit to one significant individual and one significant group action to reduce their carbon footprint. Upon successful assessment, a learner is awarded a uniquely numbered certificate to evidence their Carbon Literacy and to confirm that they have met the requirements of the Carbon Literacy Standard.

Find out how many people are currently Carbon Literate [here](#).

*“Carbon Literacy gives people the knowledge to speak with confidence about climate change to their peers, friends, and neighbours, which is so important in shifting attitudes and raising awareness. It also allows participants to develop a broad, instinctive understanding of where carbon emissions come from, and know what steps they and others can take to reduce them.” - CCF Capacity Building Officer at Keep Scotland Beautiful.*

## 2. Why Carbon Literacy in museums?

We are facing a climate crisis driven by greenhouse gas emissions, and museums have a significant footprint. As in all sectors, there’s a real need to act and for the sector to do its bit to limit climate change impacts. Many museums have acknowledged the climate emergency, signing up to movements like Culture Declares Emergency to show a commitment to the decarbonisation of the museum sector.

Carbon Literacy is a powerful resource for this work. It provides staff with skills and confidence to take impactful carbon reduction action within their museums to help tackle the climate crisis.

Carbon Literacy also speaks to the museum sector's role in society. Museums act as stewards of heritage, culture, nature, and knowledge. They are trusted institutions in their communities that engage millions of people every year – in-person and digitally. Ultimately, they tell important stories about humans and our home planet. And so, museums are ideally placed to engage with climate change and empower communities to reduce emissions. Carbon Literacy can act as the catalyst for museums to deliver vital messages about climate change, which is undoubtedly one of the most important stories of our time.

As well as this, climate action and environmental responsibility have become central values to museum audiences and funders. Communities are overwhelmingly in favour of climate action, and as public institutions, museums have a responsibility to act.

The primary funding bodies, such as Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, are prioritising environmental sustainability, as are many local authorities and universities that museums may sit within. Regardless of funding source, all museums sit within a broader context that is also working to address the climate crisis. This includes local authority plans, regional strategies, and sectors reckoning with their carbon footprints (e.g., heritage railway museums and the use of coal). Carbon Literacy can help museums to meet the expectations of funders and audiences alike.

### **3. What will your staff gain from the training?**

By the end of their training, your staff will have:

- Gained an understanding of the **basic science of climate change** and how climate change is affecting us both **globally** and **locally**.
- Gained an understanding of how **climate change can affect museums**.
- Explored the **impact** that museums can have on tackling climate change.

- Created **actions** to help reduce the carbon footprint of your museum.
- Explored strategies for influencing others to take action on climate change.

#### **4. The role of museums in taking climate action**

Museums have significant footprints. Their role in climate action can include ensuring their practices are as carbon neutral as possible.

At the same time, museums have significant influence in their communities and on a broader scale. By demonstrating best practices, museums can encourage and empower visitors, other museums, and the wider organisations that fund or govern them to take climate action. A museum could do this in many ways, from programming and commissioning to advocacy and sector support.

Museums' opportunity to influence can not be underestimated. UK museum visits topped [85 million in 2019](#), which is 85 million opportunities to engage audiences with the issue of climate change. By using their platform and collections to engage with environmental topics museums can reimagine themselves as critical sites of climate action in society.

#### **5. Beyond climate**

By embedding awareness of the climate impacts of everyday actions, Carbon Literacy training enables employees to make informed decisions to cut carbon, energy, and waste in your museum. What other benefits does Carbon Literacy provide?

The Energy Saving Trust reports that the key advantages of implementing an **employee behavioural change programme** are:

1. Reduced energy bills and transport costs.
2. Improved employee morale, satisfaction, and productivity.
3. Enhanced image and credibility.
4. Up-to-date knowledge and information for your staff.

## 6. The financial case for Carbon Literacy

- The Carbon Trust estimates that even low or no-cost behavioural changes can reduce energy costs by at least 10%. Systematic action could save between £400 and £1,000/year for every employee.
- Jacobs UK indicates that typical carbon savings from behavioural approaches similar to Carbon Literacy are **at least 5-15% per person**.

*“To say [Carbon Literacy] has been something of a life-changing experience for me is probably not an overstatement... In hard economic terms, so far, we have already reduced our organisation’s energy consumption significantly, and this has saved us over £10,000 this year alone. All the more impressive perhaps when you consider that we’ve been doing this now for less than six months.”* - **Building Operations and Logistics Manager from The Atkinson, Southport**

*“Carbon Literacy will save our company money, increase our staff’s well-being, and most of all, enable us to bring these skills to our tenants. They will benefit through lower bills, healthier lifestyles, and greater employability. Based on the pledges the staff made during the training, the estimated initial carbon saving is 77 tonnes CO2.”* - **CEO, Northwards Housing**

## 7. The social case for Carbon Literacy

- Carbon Literacy allows staff to actively engage with your museum’s priorities and ambitions by taking responsibility for climate change within their workplace. Learners have reported feeling motivated and empowered to act following their Carbon Literacy training.
- Carbon Literacy provides employees with the knowledge and skills to cascade and embed environmentally sustainable and socially responsible values throughout your museum and beyond. Carbon Literate employees are more environmentally conscious and inclined to engage with environmental initiatives, often resulting in healthier, happier, and more active staff.

## **8. The co-benefits of climate action**

Climate action needn't be considered yet another challenge for museums to overcome. Instead, we often find that climate action can also help address museums' existing priorities.

For example, museums can save money by addressing energy and resource usage. By doing audits of processes, museum staff can identify areas of waste, and as a result, encourage staff behaviour change and save money.

Museums also benefit from partnerships – whether that is with funders, other museums, audiences, or suppliers. Addressing climate change offers countless opportunities for new and better relationships. A museum could partner with a local food charity to provide meals made entirely from wasted food. A museum could also partner with other museums to create a climate action network, through which museum staff could share sector-specific advice and tips and the costs associated with research and climate action.

These can be understood as the co-benefits of climate action; other co-benefits in museums include enhanced reputations, increased audience interest in museum work, and an improved likelihood that museums will meet their ambitions to inspire and empower their communities and preserve their collections. There are boundless possibilities for museums to engage with climate action in imaginative and inspirational ways that also benefit the museum itself.

## **9. How can training be rolled out in your museum?**

The Toolkit has been designed to be picked up by any team member and delivered internally – no prior training experience is necessary! The Toolkit contains everything you need to deliver a Carbon Literacy course within your museum or sector organisation. We recommend that you become Carbon Literate yourself before delivering the Carbon Literacy for Museums Toolkit. However, an allowance could be made if you already have an advanced understanding of sustainability issues or are an experienced trainer.

## Roots & Branches pathway

There are two pathways to access the Carbon Literacy for Museums Toolkit, depending on the type of museum you come from. The first is through the Roots & Branches project, aimed at people working or volunteering in **Accredited, non-national museums in England only**. If this does not apply to you, you can still access the Museums Toolkit – scroll down and follow The Carbon Literacy Project pathway instructions.

If you are from an eligible museum, you can receive support through the Museum Development Network. This includes access to free Carbon Literacy courses delivered by your local Museum Development provider, ensuring that you are Carbon Literate and ready to deliver the course within your organisation. One or two staff members from your museum could attend one of these courses, which act as a launchpad for rolling out Carbon Literacy at your museum. Contact your local Museum Development provider to learn more about these courses.

You can also get additional support from Alison Criddle, Carbon Literacy Officer at Museum Development North West. Alison will be delivering free Train-the-Trainer workshops to eligible museum staff, providing you with training skills tailored to the Toolkit. For more information on these workshops and other support, contact [alison.criddle@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:alison.criddle@manchester.ac.uk).

As a Roots & Branches eligible museum, you can access the Toolkit through The Carbon Literacy Project directly once you are ready to deliver to your organisation.

## The Carbon Literacy Project pathway

If you do not fit the Roots & Branches project criteria, you can still access the Toolkit and roll out Carbon Literacy at your museum or sector organisation.

Before delivering the Carbon Literacy for Museums course, we recommend you become Carbon Literate yourself. You can do this by signing up for an open Carbon Literacy course – use our [events page](#) to find an available course. *Carbon Literacy for Interested Organisations* is an excellent example of a regular open course that a museum worker could join.

We generally arrange a meeting with prospective museums before they begin delivering the Carbon Literacy for museums course. Get in touch with us at [museums@carbonliteracy.com](mailto:museums@carbonliteracy.com) to arrange a meeting to discuss your plans for delivery, where you will also have an opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

The Carbon Literacy Project will also be running free Trainer Orientation workshops regularly. These workshops are aimed at people who have become Carbon Literate and who want to begin delivering Carbon Literacy at their museum using the Toolkit. The workshops will provide an opportunity for future trainers to ask questions and receive tips on Carbon Literacy delivery and processes. You can also find out more about these sessions by contacting the email address above.

## **10. What do people think about the Toolkit?**

*“The training really made us think about how we can better manage sustainability within our museums, but also within our personal lives. Based on our discussions, we’re introducing a guide for procuring services and products, using essential questions to ask suppliers to ensure we are buying from organisations that have the same values as ourselves”.* – **Jane Lowery, General Manager at Scarborough Museums and Galleries.**

*“In terms of the ways that Carbon Literacy will impact my organisation – I think it’s changing the way that we offer our training, changing the way we offer our grants, and changing us personally as well”.* – **Sarah Menary, Museum Development Officer at Museum Development South East.**

*“I would definitely recommend the course. It’s been very enlightening and surprising, and there’s been some really simple things that we can do that have a big impact on our emissions. I think that some people think that the global issues are insurmountable and scary, but during the training it’s broken down in a way that shows that you can do this and you can create actions that contribute towards*



*positive change*". – **Denise Lambert, Learning and Communities Officer at The National Football Museum.**

## **11. What could be perceived as barriers?**

### ***"Cost"***

- The Toolkit is distributed free to UK museums and museum sector organisations.
- The £10 per person certification fee is an investment that will pay back. The price will be more than offset by the financial and resource savings made through employees being more environmentally and carbon conscious.
- As the Toolkit has been designed for internal delivery, you do not need to allocate money to external trainers.
- Environmental responsibility and sustainability have become core values of many museum funders. Carbon Literacy can help your museum meet funders' expectations and allows for continued and further funding from funding bodies.

### ***"It's not relevant/it's not my responsibility"***

- Climate change is relevant to every sector and every employee – because it will affect every sector and employee. Carbon Literacy training is therefore a valuable resource for all of society.
- Museums have different perspectives and focuses, but all are public-facing institutions. Museums and their staff have a responsibility to act on behalf of the communities they serve and sit within, which undoubtedly includes addressing the climate crisis.
- Carbon Literacy can help museum staff to align their work to the wider values of the museum. Museums seek to empower, educate, and inspire communities whilst acting as stewards of a great variety of objects, artworks, and other interests. Carbon Literacy can provide staff with the skills to meet museums' missions - empowering audiences and stewarding sustainably into the future.

***“We don't have time/the capacity.”***

- Would you omit information from a health and safety induction to save time? Climate change will impact the health and safety of current and future generations.
- There are different ways to share the load of delivering Carbon Literacy training. Your first cohort of learners could be museum colleagues who are also interested in becoming trainers. You could then share the delivery of Carbon Literacy amongst several museum staff. You could even team up with another museum and share the responsibility of delivering Carbon Literacy training.
- The course within the Toolkit is flexible and can include some home learning and a customised schedule. You can make Carbon Literacy training work around your museum's time constraints.
- Taking climate action will provide your museum with co-benefits, which can save your museum time in other areas of museum work, and with other museum priorities.
- Ultimately, helping to meet broader societal targets on climate change and carbon emission reduction will require an investment of time and resources in all sectors. The Carbon Literacy for Museums Toolkit reduces the time needed to make this happen in the museum sector.

## **12. FAQ**

### **Why is Carbon Literacy a day's worth of learning?**

Significant levels of behaviour change are required to limit global heating to under two °C of warming. To understand the scale of the challenge, emissions declined by around 7% in 2020, and science dictates that we should aim for at least a 7.6% decrease every year to stay within the global carbon budget.

All Carbon Literacy courses must consist of a day's worth (~7-8 hours) of learning— an element of the Carbon Literacy Standard. There is a wealth of evidence which proves that Carbon Literacy training changes people's behaviour

and enables and motivates them to take action on climate change. Learners need to understand the scale of the challenge in the first half of the course before learning about the specific and significant actions they can take in the second half. 1-2 hours or a half day of learning has not been proven to bring about the long-lasting behaviour change required of us. Only learners who have completed a day's worth of approved Carbon Literacy learning and met the accreditation requirements can be certified as Carbon Literate. To meet the needs of your learners, there are many different ways to deliver Carbon Literacy, and training can be delivered over several sessions.

### **Does The Carbon Literacy Project deliver training?**

As the accreditation body, The Carbon Literacy Project does not deliver training. Training is provided in-house by each organisation or outsourced to experienced Carbon Literacy trainers or training organisations.

### **Why is training delivered in Toolkits?**

- Carbon Literacy Toolkits have been developed to maximise the ease and speed of adopting Carbon Literacy. The Toolkits are in a ready-to-go, easily accessible format for in-house delivery.
- No matter where your museum is within the UK, the Toolkit is customisable to be specific to your unique needs. Data sources have been carefully selected to provide up-to-date, robust, and accurate information relevant to your setting.
- A panel of museums and sector organisations have co-created, reviewed, and piloted the Toolkit materials, ensuring the latest and best sectoral materials are used.

### **What is included within the Toolkits?**

The Toolkit contains:

- A **Trainer Manual**, with detailed delivery instructions for the Carbon Literacy course.
- A **Slide Deck**, which is used for delivery.

- An interactive **Activity Pack** pdf, which can be used to support the delivery of activities.
- A **Getting Started** pack, with all the information you need to get your training off the ground.
- **Action Evidence Forms**, which you will use to submit evidence that your staff are now Carbon Literate.
- A **Resource Document**, containing a list of helpful resources that can support your museum with carbon reduction and climate action.

### 13. Sign up for our museums newsletter

Sign-up to receive our museums newsletter via [this online form](#). Our regular newsletter will include updates on our Toolkit materials, relevant events, inspiring examples of carbon reduction action in museums, and sector news and resources.

### 14. Want to find out more? Please get in touch

Email: [museums@carbonliteracy.com](mailto:museums@carbonliteracy.com)

Telephone: 0161 298 1782

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CarbonLiteracy/>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/Carbon\\_Literacy](https://twitter.com/Carbon_Literacy)

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/carbonliteracy/>

Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-carbon-literacy-project>