

Climate change action at Cockpit

2021





Foreword

In the face of climate crisis it can be easy to despair. As sea levels rise, weather systems grow chaotic, energy bills soar, and species disappear – and as carbon reduction targets are missed yet again – it is hard for small craft businesses to see how they could make any kind of difference.

Yet despair is the one thing we must avoid. And, far from being powerless, craft offers hope.

Craft puts us back in touch with the fact that we are part of the natural world, not apart from it. Makers' studios have become labs for new forms of production, using low-carbon processes working with materials derived from waste. And craft proposes a different, more human-scale way of doing business.

How can craft shape a more sustainable future? That is the starting point for a generation of makers who, disillusioned by making yet more stuff for late capitalism's linear habit of take-make-waste, are designing for a circular economy.

Some, like tailor Jennie Adamson, have devised techniques to eliminate waste during production. Others are inventing novel, hybrid materials, working them using heritage craft techniques; designer and handweaver Fadhel Mourali's 'Hedared filament' is a case in point. Still others are mining waste itself to make products from what has become earth's most abundant resource: the stuff we throw away.

Sceptics say that these are small-scale experiments, interesting but incapable of making impact. I disagree. So do the big brands that have their eyes on the techniques being pioneered in craft studios. Yes, greenwashing is rife, but manufacturers are waking up to, and scaling up, solutions created by makers.

Disconnection from materials has played a part in the climate emergency, making us wasteful and careless. Fast fashion, like fast food, cuts us off from the reality of how and where things are made. By contrast, craft slows us down. It reconnects us, draws attention to the preciousness of material resources, reveals the interdependence of humans

and the more-than-human world. It teaches us to take care, to repair, to cherish.

Facing environmental collapse, should we really be making anything anymore? As waste piles up while material stocks shrink, can we justify creating even more stuff? These are questions every maker must ask themselves. Yet we still need things, and to be human is to make.

With its slowed-down processes and local supply chains, craft offers an alternative to an economy fixated on notions of growth through cheap mass production and cheap mass consumption. To make craft is to make well. And to buy craft is to buy well, buy once, buy to last.

Back in the mid-80s, Cockpit began as a handful of business starter units for makers working with recycled materials. They were part of a movement for which Jane Atfield's iconic 1993 recycled plastic chair, made from discarded yoghurt cartons and detergent bottles, became an early emblem. The Atfield Chair is now in the collections of the Crafts Council and V&A, high-density, recycled plastic has found new uses in the hands of the next generation of makers and, as you will discover in this report, at Cockpit that movement is stronger than ever.

On the eve of the UN Climate Change Conference COP26, Cockpit makers affirm the power we each have to respond to the climate emergency with ingenuity and with moral imagination. Individuals and businesses, we all have a part to play. We each can make a difference.

Craft is a gift that encourages us to look beyond ourselves. It puts us in touch with the past – think of a thumbprint in the 5,000-year-old Orkney clay shard that links us to an ancient potter as if it had just now been pulled from the kiln. In its care for the earth's resources, craft reminds us of our responsibilities to the long future, to generations to come. In the words of 19th century Arts & Crafts maker, designer, author and activist William Morris, "We are only the trustees for those who come after us."

Annie Warburton, October 2021



Introduction

In the lead-up to the UK hosting the UN climate change conference, [COP26](#), in Glasgow in November 2021, this report provides a snapshot of the actions that Cockpit makers are taking in response to the climate emergency, framed in the context of UN [Sustainable Development Goal 13 – Take urgent action on climate change](#).

Climate change is potentially the greatest challenge of the 21st century. Decisive action needs to happen this decade if we want to prevent the consequences of the planet's atmosphere warming. Some of these effects are already being felt and include more extreme weather events, and shortages of freshwater and food.

Both individuals and businesses contribute to the rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This is through a range of activities, including using energy generated by burning fossil fuels, the transport and shipping of goods we purchase or sell, and the waste we create, which is often burnt or sent to landfills.

The impacts of climate change will also be felt by both individuals and businesses. Climate change could affect our ability to access raw materials, influence supply chains and alter the expectations of customers. Policies to mitigate climate change

could also affect business, for example, through the taxation or regulation of carbon emitting activities.

To engage in the conversation of climate change and craft, we have collected examples of how makers can contribute to environmental sustainability.

In July 2021, we surveyed Cockpit makers to understand their attitudes and views on climate change and the impact it may have on small craft businesses, as well as the steps they are taking to reduce the carbon footprint of their businesses. This survey was completed by 40% of makers based at Cockpit at the time. We followed up with a focus group to discuss the issues in more depth and put together a collection of short case studies to illustrate the major themes.

This project was initiated by Cockpit Trustee Sarah Samuel. The research was carried out by Emma Sims, Programme Coordinator at Cockpit and Grace Compton, Sustainability Consultant at PA Consulting who have also authored this report.

This report provides insight into the way Cockpit makers view their businesses in relation to climate change, and highlights actions they are taking to make their businesses more sustainable.



What are the UN Sustainable Development Goals?

[The Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, and act as a 'blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and planet'. The SDGs cover a broad range of actions or ambitions that we can all think about contributing to for a more sustainable future. In this report we focus on Cockpit makers contribution to goal 13 "Climate Action". Taking action will lead to reduced greenhouse gas emissions and build climate resilience whilst also leading to better prosperity for all.

In contributing to SDG 13, businesses, including microbusinesses, can take steps to lower their emissions, change consumption habits and make purchasing choices that have a positive impact on the planet.



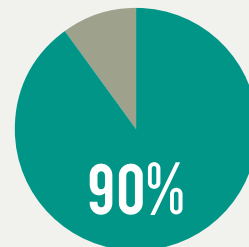
Awareness of climate change and its impact

All makers surveyed agreed that climate change is happening now and poses a serious threat for people around the world. Most makers feel that every one of us can reduce the effects of climate change. They also feel that businesses should be doing more to tackle climate change. Overall, 90% of makers considered that craft can make a positive contribution to tackling climate change.

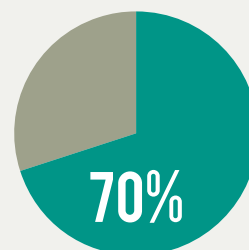
Makers were asked to what extent do they think climate change is going to impact their practice. 70% of makers surveyed said they expected climate change to have some impact on their businesses in the short and near term, although many said they could not identify the specific ways in which it would affect them.

Examples of the ways climate change is expected to impact craft businesses include:

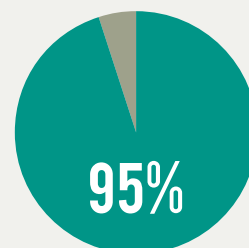
- Environmentally conscious work gains more interest as buyers become more aware of climate change, and are more inclined to purchase pieces with lower climate impacts
- Reduced availability of natural materials such as linen, wool, alpaca due to climate change induced natural hazards
- Changes to regulation on waste



Craft can make a positive contribution



Climate change will have an impact on my business



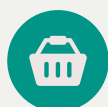
Businesses should be doing more to tackle climate change

“Climate change indirectly affects my practice all the time - in the way I use resources, how I source materials (and the choices I make about which materials to use), use of dye materials, travel, opportunities etc, in the future (possibly near future), I expect it to impact on the cost and availability of materials.” **KENDALL CLARKE** TEXTILES



What does climate action look like for small craft businesses?

As we all contribute to the causes of climate change, we should also all be responsible for the solutions. There are a wide range of things we can do to act on climate change and reduce our carbon footprint as individuals and business owners. These actions can be split into five main themes:



Conscious and sustainable consumption of resources: Not using more than we need and buying from sustainable sources. Making swaps to resources that have lower associated emissions such as those made from recycled materials or produced locally.



Minimising energy use and being energy efficient: Using as little energy, such as electricity in lighting or for machinery, as possible and making sure not to waste energy that isn't needed. Ensuring that your energy is sustainable by making the switch to renewables.



Reducing waste and extending the lifetime of goods: Reducing the amount we produce and consume can save carbon emissions from creating new products, or energy used in processing waste. Repairing, re-using and recycling all help to reduce your contribution to carbon emissions.



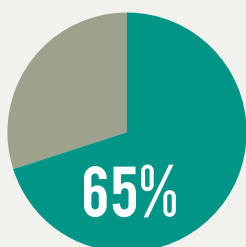
Thinking about your travel choices and your product miles: Avoid making unnecessary journeys by car or plane and swap to public transport if possible. Minimise emissions associated with receiving your materials, buy as local as possible. Consider the impact of shipping your products and choose a company that offers low emission delivery.



Using your voice and purchasing power to drive systemic change: Large corporations, governments and industries are also responsible for emissions, and we need everyone to contribute to reducing emissions. Putting pressure on governments and corporations to take action can also help to drive change. Demonstrate there is a market for low carbon goods and services by directing your spending and investment into sustainable businesses.

Actions Cockpit makers are taking to tackle climate change

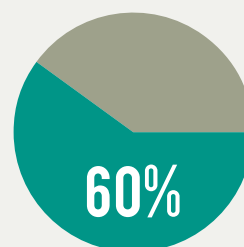
Makers at Cockpit are already taking a broad range of actions to reduce the carbon emissions from their businesses. Over half have taken steps to educate themselves about the climate crisis and have reviewed the environmental impact of their practices. Of those that have not yet taken these steps, one third are planning to think about the ways they can reduce their carbon emissions. Whilst only 10% of makers had calculated the carbon footprint of their business, many have taken practical and tangible steps. Some examples of these are outlined below.



Reduced
product miles



Educated themselves
about climate change



Reduced
energy usage

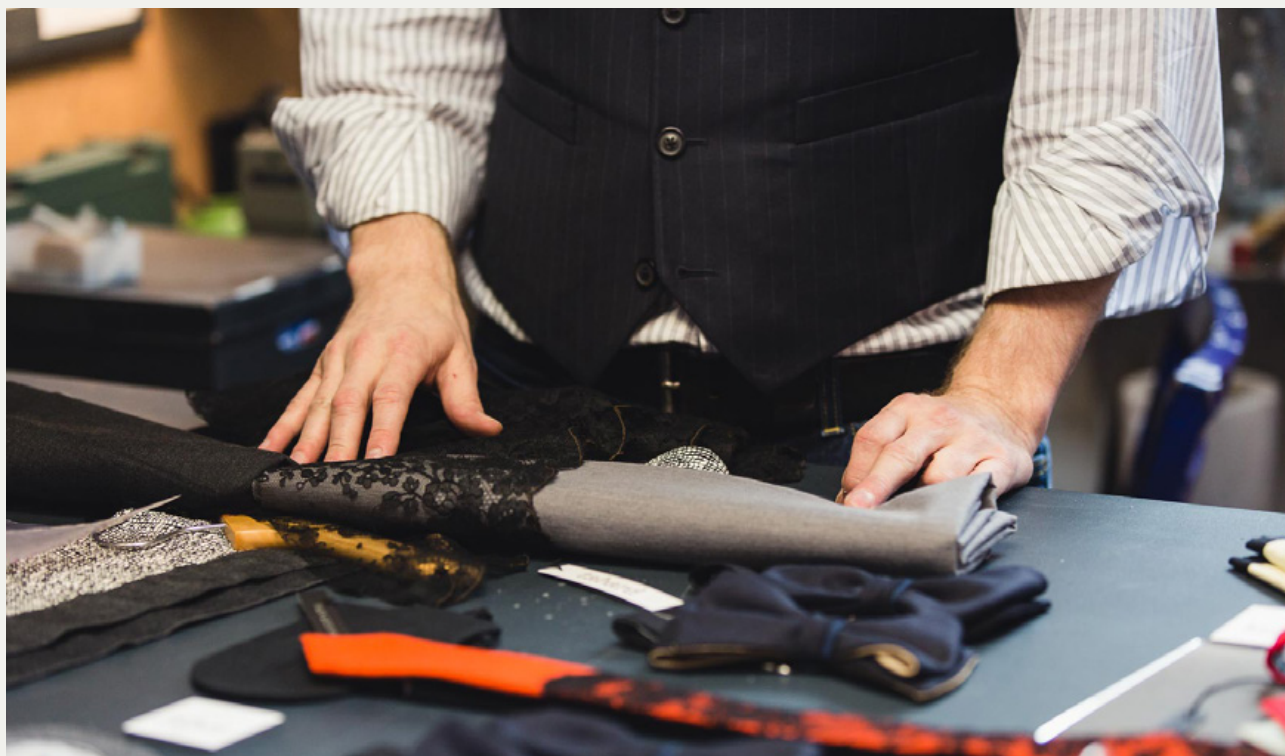


Consuming materials sustainably

Two thirds of Cockpit makers have considered where they source materials and have tried to reduce 'product miles'. Makers at Cockpit are very conscious of, and considerate in, the materials they choose to use, and some are going to great lengths to ensure the sustainability of the materials they work with. Makers recognise the environmental benefits of taking such action but increasingly see that consumers are looking for evidence of sustainable provenance in the products they buy. Some makers noted that assessing the impact of a craft businesses' supply chain provides the opportunity to work with new materials and methods to develop their craft.

Where new materials are required, some makers source these locally, including directly from farmers. Some makers are sourcing their materials from within walking distance of the studios. It is noted that these actions not only reduce the associated carbon emissions, but directly contribute to fair wages and employment in the UK.

“I use wool and cotton products, sourced as locally as possible. The effect of climate change on the production and efficacy of this product will, I believe, radically effect my business! I am tentatively looking towards an alternative to my current materials, but the technology to produce quality alternatives is not there yet.” **IAN SCOTT KETTLE** MENS ACCESSORIES



Fadhel Mourali - Innovation of a new material



Fadhel Mourali is an artist and hand weaver. Fadhel is driven to discover the possibilities of material processes and translate them visually to create new meanings and concepts.

Over the past year Fadhel has been exploring his great grandfather's heritage as a basket maker in the Swedish village of Hedared. Through the project 'To be and to become' Fadhel has combined the late-grown pine traditionally used by his great grandfather with biodegradable PLA-plastic to create a wooden filament yarn, the 'Hedared filament'. Fadhel then used this newly innovated material in his hand weaving to create a woven response to his research.

“I strive to understand the complexities of sustainability in my practice, and how the climate crisis is connected to social and financial sustainability. I regard my role as designer to be a mediator between these various complexities and place my practice in the middle of it.”

Catarina Riccabona – Conscious sourcing of materials

Catarina Riccabona is a textile artist who makes one-off pieces for interiors using selected natural yarns.

Catarina selects the raw materials she uses very carefully. She typically uses linen and hemp yarns, both of which need little or no fertilisers and unlike conventional cotton, don't need additional irrigation. Linen and hemp grow successfully in the cooler temperatures of Europe and hemp is also beneficial to the soil structure. Where possible Catarina uses undyed yarns, to avoid the water waste and chemicals needed in the dyeing process.

“Right from the beginning I have set up my practice to work as environmentally friendly as possible. But I'll keep myself informed about ongoing changes and will continue to make positive changes where and when possible.”



Jennie Adamson and Ian Scott Kettle – Zero waste pattern cutting

Both Ian and Jennie have been actively incorporating Zero Waste pattern cutting techniques within their practices. Every part of the fabric is used, and no material is wasted from the pattern cutting process. Jennie has recently developed a collection of Zero Waste silk shirts and Ian's accessories are all cut to avoid waste, with any scrap materials kept and incorporated into future pieces.



Jennie Adamson is a freelance, bespoke tailor and pattern cutter, focusing on women's tailoring. She has a background working on Savile Row.

“In some ways it is easier for small craft practices to make positive changes, because we are small and have more control over how we work and where our materials come from. It's important for makers to share with each other their resources and their ideas for making a difference with regards to reducing waste and impact on the environment.”

Ian Scott Kettle creates a selection of 'non-garments' for men and women. Ian creates contemporary re-workings of traditional, functional, ceremonial, and decorative accessories.

“In fashion there is a massive issue with green washing, people talking a big game and doing very little. That said, there is great work being done by some, and independent craft brands really are the future of aspirational, luxury retail. They are the antidote for the big brands of today.”





Reducing waste

Whilst recycling and reuse of materials has been commonplace for those working with high value materials, e.g., metalsmiths and jewellers, we are now starting to see the same level of concern and consideration for materials across all craft disciplines. Makers look to use surplus and waste materials, such as dead stock fabric and off-cut leather. Some textile businesses are using waste materials and already existing materials in weaving, such as vintage fabrics, unwanted clothes. Glass and ceramic makers are reusing materials and seeking to use recycled materials, in some cases this also has an impact on the overall energy needed to create their end pieces.

Makers are also considering the impact of the packaging they use, with the majority using recycled and recyclable packaging and re-using packaging where appropriate. In addition, makers are encouraging customers to recycle or re-use packaging boxes they receive.

Eva Dennis and Arturo Soto – Actively using waste materials

Eva Dennis is a textile and product designer working in weave. Eva weaves waste and unwanted materials and fabrics to create her pieces. Eva creates statement pieces using upcycled materials resulting in unique products retaining memories and associations from the past.



Arturo Soto (Memories of Green) is a woodturner working with reclaimed and waste wood, particularly plywood and diseased or rotten wood. Arturo sees the value in every piece of material he uses and builds its value through his design process.



“ There is a huge focus on constantly bringing out new clothing and samples in such a fast-paced way, which in turn is destroying the environment. I decided that if I am going to pursue a career in textiles, I need to find a way to utilise existing materials, and work in a more circular way. ” **EVA DENNIS**

“ My objective has been to develop a system where I can transform almost any piece of discarded wood, especially birch plywood, and use it to create seamless, beautiful pieces. This is the ultimate form of extending the lifetime of goods, by giving discarded pieces of wood with imperfections and disease a second life. ” **ARTURO SOTO**



Using resources consciously

Energy and water use in manufacturing processes is also an area of interest for Cockpit makers. 60% of makers have tried to reduce the overall energy use of their businesses. Makers working in ceramics have taken steps to reduce the amount of energy used in firing their products and are avoiding firing pieces multiple times.

Kerry Hastings – Conscious use of energy



Kerry Hastings is a ceramic artist focussing on vessels that explore themes such as harmony and discord, colour and form, silhouette, and contour.

Ceramics tends to be very energy intensive. Since September 2020, Kerry has started to look at how she can be more energy efficient in her practice. Kerry has developed a process using slips and engobes, rather than glazes, which only require her work to undergo one low temperature firing. This significantly reduces the energy she needs to use to finish each piece.

“Even though the impact of an individual maker is minimal to that of industry, there is value in attempting to be self-reliant and resourceful wherever possible when working towards environmental sustainability in one's practice.”

Martina Spetlova – Conscious use of water

MWOVEN by Martina Spetlova creates luxury textiles using unique handwoven leather techniques applied to jackets, accessories, and interiors.

The traditional leather tanning process can be heavily water intensive and use large amounts of chemicals that can be harmful to the environment. Martina has been working with a company that is reducing the environmental impact of the leather tanning process by avoiding the use of metals, reducing water waste, using fewer soaps and chemicals, and reducing energy consumption.

“Sustainability and ethics sit equally in my brand philosophy. I believe in delivering beautiful, handcrafted pieces without compromising on integrity and in the importance of social responsibility and transparency, giving my customer access to the full story behind its making.”





Challenging consumerism

Adjusting patterns of production and consumption is another way makers have been able to reduce their contribution to carbon emissions. Some makers offer rental of their pieces rather than sale and others produce work on commissions or in small batches reducing the risk of wasted stock. Reducing the quantity of pieces produced means less energy is used overall in the production of the pieces.

A focus on longevity is also key to Cockpit makers, with makers choosing to make work with a long life-span, producing quality pieces that will be treasured and last a lifetime. Many also seek to extend the life of existing pieces, reworking family heirlooms or repairing existing items.

Some makers recognise there is a tension between creation, creativity, and sustainability. In the craft and art sectors, there is a huge focus on the "new" which conflicts with the need to produce and consume less. Many makers are working to change the narrative around their work by highlighting the craftsmanship, materials and time involved in producing an item. They are also encouraging their customers to buy fewer, better quality, handmade pieces where they have a connection with the maker and the materials and teaching them to really value the items they buy.



Communicating issues to drive change

Many makers recognise that they can use their work and their making practice to communicate concerns about the environment or engage with the public to start conversations about sustainability and the climate crisis.

Lastly, makers have also taken steps to ensure the transport and travel associated with their businesses is as low carbon as possible. For example, most makers use public transport, cycle, or walk to the studio as a further way of reducing their overall footprint. Many use zero carbon footprint (bike) delivery services for orders going to local addresses within London.

Many makers feel that because they are small and often working alone or in a small team, they can more easily take responsibility for their actions. They can make changes and easily act or make adaptations to their business. But some makers recognise that these actions need to be scaled up to achieve real impact.

Makers see that there is a business opportunity in addressing climate change and acting in a sustainable way. Consumers are increasingly aware of and interested in sustainability and are looking towards smaller businesses to allow them to purchase products in a conscious way. The connection to making and materials is of value, and makers are starting to communicate this to their customers as a way of increasing interest in their products.

Richard McVetis and Katrin Spranger – Using craft to raise awareness

Richard McVetis is an artist working in hand embroidery and has recently been exploring and exposing the issues of climate change through two new works titled "Coal seams" and "A Portrait of Coal". Richard says "In Britain coal is seen as a symbol of the past. Though, coal is a symbol of the present, the future and the climate emergency. Coal still plays a huge part in "fast fashion" and continues to increase the carbon footprint of the fashion industry."



“ Craft is a great way to engage with ideas around climate change through making. Whether this is through artworks or workshops, craft can shine a spotlight on the current climate crisis. Craft and making teach us to think about how things are made. This better awareness of materials and making can create a better, more conscious response to the environment, materials, and the products in our lives. We have, as a society, lost our connection to how things are made. We need to bring value to the everyday and understanding materials and making can do this. ”



Katrin Spranger is an activist and multi-disciplinary artist working with sculpture, jewellery, and performance.

Katrin's most recent work "Aquatopia" takes a critical view on our fresh water supplies, its increasing demand and pollution. In the UK, we may not recognise the urgency to rethink water consumption, yet our choices in food, materials, and lifestyle tie into a global issue of increasing water scarcity. Katrin uses her work to communicate concepts which address the concern of depleting natural resources, excessive consumption, and the pollution of fresh water.

“ I create dystopian narratives that engage with the environment and natural resources threatened with depletion. My jewellery and sculpture aim to provoke to raise awareness about urgent environmental issues such as water scarcity, honeybee decline, and crude oil consumption. ”

Alice Burnhope – Engaging communities and education



Alice Burnhope is a multi-disciplinary textile artist and designer, specialising in interactive and socially engaged artwork. She utilises discarded fabrics to address the current imbalance between material use, waste, and the effect on the natural environment.

Alice is about to embark on a major new project to offer solutions for humanity's growing disconnection with the natural world through community engagement. She will be combining bio textiles, medicinal plants, waste textiles and immersive installation work to engage the public through experience and education.

“As a conceptual artist and functional maker, when creating artwork, I'm not satisfied to develop something that is just visually pleasing. I believe the work should promote a message and help benefit both the individual and the planet, therefore each of piece of work becomes part of a bigger social and ecological discussion.”



What more can makers do?

The responses to our survey, and discussions in the focus group show a strong appetite among makers based at Cockpit to reduce the carbon footprint of their craft businesses, and many are planning to take even more action soon.

Sustainability is a broad term and means something different to each maker, informed partly by their own values, but also by the limitations of their practice. For makers just beginning to think about reducing the carbon emissions created by their craft business, there is an opportunity to think critically about how they will build sustainability into their business model and core values, and to evaluate what being sustainable looks like for their specific business. But this is something that all makers will need to revisit throughout their careers.



Eight actions for climate responsibility



Celebrate craft skills and creativity.

Show the value of your work over and above mass production.



Collaborate.

Work with others to move things forward and learn.



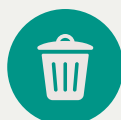
Make quality items that last.

Encourage people to buy less and reflect on their consumption habits



Source materials carefully.

Consider the sustainability of your supply chain. Making sure sustainable changes are researched and meaningful.



Be conscious of the materials and resources you use.

Recognise what you need to use and avoid waste.



Avoid misleading statements.

Be clear about what you are doing. Making sure sustainable changes are researched and meaningful.



Use your artistic voice.

Create a response to climate change and start conversations.



Be innovative and experiment.

Apply your creativity to solve problems and develop your response to climate change.

Many makers have reported that they are keen to explore their supply chains and understand the sustainability of these to assess their own processes and make the best choices they can. However, this process can be difficult and complex and some makers report that they are waiting for the supply chain to catch up. Makers can use their voice and their buying power to put pressure on suppliers to provide information and products which meet their definition of sustainable. Finding sustainable suppliers can be time consuming and tricky, and this process could also be made easier by makers sharing their sustainable suppliers.

One area that many makers want to investigate is carbon footprint analysis, taking the time to look into the impact of every element of their craft practice as well as their supply chain. Setting a baseline of a business's carbon impact is a useful exercise which can be revisited annually. Tracking progress ensures that makers are meeting their goals and sticking to their values of sustainability.

Hannah Bedford – Carbon offsetting

Hannah Bedford is a maker of contemporary fine jewellery, using the ancient art of granulation. She has a focus on using ethical and sustainable materials.

Hannah has set an ambition to make her business climate positive and offsets the emissions associated with her business and personal emissions by partnering with an organisation called Ecologi. Hannah makes payments to Ecologi which are then invested in projects which have a positive climate impact for example, tree planting, reforestation, and solar energy.



“As with all these issues it is complicated and there is never a perfect answer. I read up on the arguments for and against carbon offsetting. However, as a very small business, with low carbon emissions I felt that it was a positive step I could take and that this small action would be better than doing nothing.”



Next steps at Cockpit

In our survey some makers shared that they were unsure about what they could do next, where they could access information, or even how climate change might affect them. However, we also identified that there are many makers who are passionate and knowledgeable in this area. There is an opportunity for the Cockpit community to come together, share knowledge and expertise to support each other to unpick the complex concept of sustainability and build our understanding of how all our actions are impacting the environment. We will facilitate this type of exchange between makers, staff and trustees through the formation of a sustainability working group to provide a forum for discussion and knowledge sharing.

Makers would like more information about, and a greater understanding of their impact on our environment, both from a personal and business perspective. The Cockpit staff team complete an annual personal carbon footprint assessment.

By examining personal emissions, we feel we become more aware of the wider impact of all our actions including within our business. We will extend the opportunity to complete this exercise to Cockpit makers and Trustees in the next year and provide practical advice on how craft businesses can reduce their carbon footprint. We will continue to support makers to start conversations about sustainability with their customers, suppliers, and staff. This will include workshops, seminars and talks and support to assess the carbon footprint of each business. Our aim is to equip makers with the right language, understanding and questions to meet the level of sustainability and climate consciousness that fits their practice and business.

Cockpit will also review its own impact on the environment through the lens of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Conclusion

Cockpit makers are aware of climate change and the impacts that it will have on our environment and society, as well as on their own businesses. They recognise that individuals and small businesses can make a positive contribution to meeting Sustainable Development Goal 13 and are taking action on climate change. Many makers are consciously and sustainably consuming materials and energy, as well as reducing waste and exploring new models of production. Others are using their practices to communicate issues and drive change.

This is just the beginning. There is much more to be done as we all take responsibility, individually and collectively, to play our part. Craft, as Cockpit's makers show, can be a powerful part of the solution.

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Report design: Craig Yamey. Cover image: Richard McVetis, Coal Seams.
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