

NET ZERO BRIEFING FOR EVENT ORGANISERS

In November 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a landmark report stating that we have until 2030 to avoid climate catastrophe.

Urgent and unprecedented changes are needed well before 2030 to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees and avoid the worst effects of climate change. To do this we need to reduce our green house gas emissions (GHGs) to zero.

Net-zero: A North Star for Climate Action

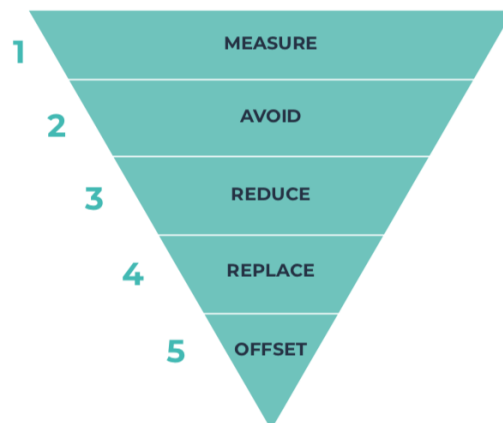
Organisations across the world are setting science-based net-zero carbon targets. Firstly, there's an important distinction to make:

- Carbon Neutral: Balancing emissions without reducing
- Net Zero: Reducing emissions as much as possible and balancing **unavoidable** emissions.

There is a hierarchy for tackling emissions:

¹

1. **Measure** to understand your impacts, set a benchmark and monitor performance toward reducing emissions
2. **Avoid** emitting more carbon by adapting to a low-carbon business model
3. **Reduce** emissions by increasing energy efficiency
4. **Balance** historical and unavoidable emissions, working with projects that increase positive impacts for people and planet.



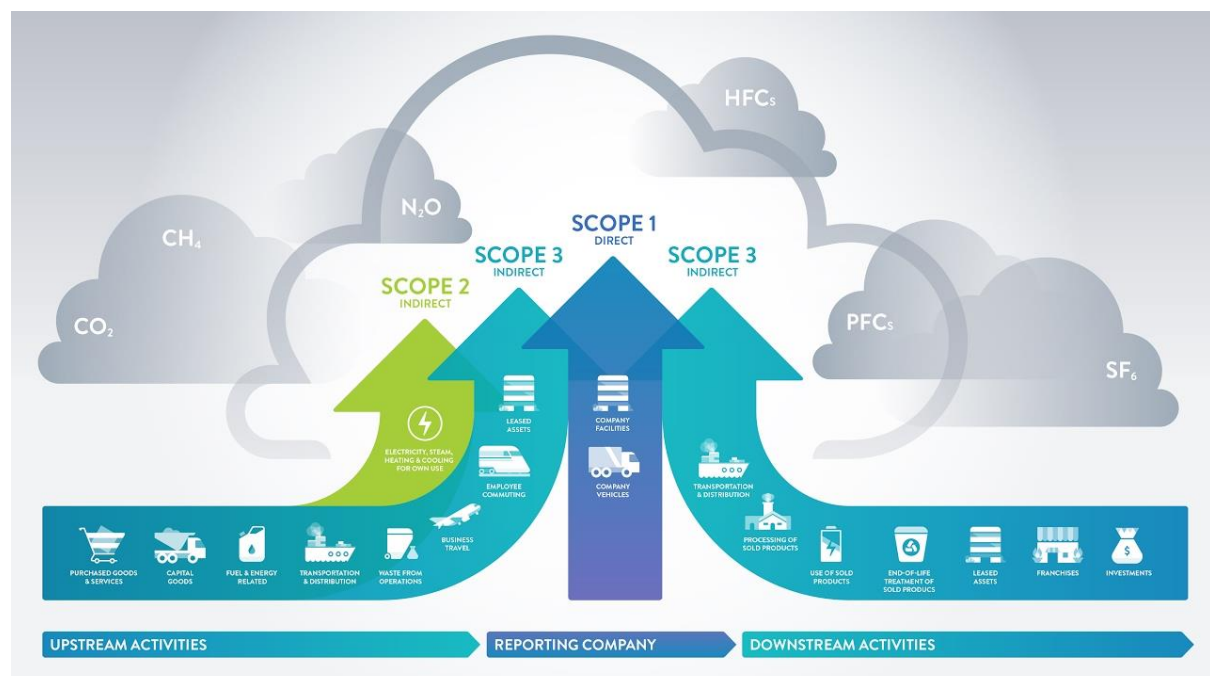
¹ Source: Putting a Price on Carbon, Julie's Bicycle (2021)

How do we work out which emissions we are responsible for?

There are some emissions that are directly under festival organisers' control – for example, waste management, energy use, staff travel – while others, such as audience travel or supply chain impacts, are outside organisers' direct control but can be influenced through incentives, contracts and procurement choices.

83% of festivalgoers expect all of the festivals they attend to tackle their environmental impacts.²

Carbon accounting is approached in terms of scopes. A business is generally responsible for scope 1 and 2 emissions, and can influence scope 3.



What is a typical festival carbon footprint?

The current benchmark for greenhouse gas emissions per audience day (per person per day on site) at UK festivals with camping is 1.9 kg CO₂e. This includes direct impacts from diesel use, water use, and waste – but not impacts from transport, travel, and the embodied carbon impacts of the production of materials, food, merchandise, etc. Travel is typically over 80% of the overall footprint of an event, however audience and contractor travel is considered to be scope 3.

Energy typically makes up **77%** of a festival's on-site CO₂e footprint, and waste **23%**. There are still blind spots for data on a range of impacts including more detailed audience travel

² Festival audience attitudes to sustainability. CGA (2019). <https://www.cga.co.uk/report-tag/consumer-research/>

data, artist and contractor travel, and material/resource use and food. The sector has achieved up to 23% reduction in relative emissions per audience day* from energy, waste, and water, mainly driven by diverting waste from landfill. Overall, total music festival carbon emissions from energy, waste, and water on-site have risen despite these gains, driven by a nearly 50% increase in audience numbers in the past five years.

Carbon Balancing

Carbon balancing is a way of funding climate solutions that remove or prevent Green House Gases from entering the atmosphere (e.g. providing renewable energy to reduce fossil fuel demand or protecting forest to maintain carbon absorption). Whilst balancing alone should not be a first priority, or the single answer to climate crisis, it is a valuable tool enabling businesses to take account for unavoidable emissions **now** by investing in climate solutions. Offsets are usually sold as units with a price per tonne of carbon dioxide (CO₂).

*“The reality is that we – government, businesses and individuals – need to cut our emissions by as much as we can, as fast as we can. We also need to invest in projects that will remove carbon emissions from the atmosphere. It’s not either/ or, it’s both. The same is true of nature. We need to protect what nature we have left, and we need to restore habitats, not one or the other.”*³ **Friends of the Earth**

For a comprehensive guide to carbon offsetting see [Putting a Price on Carbon](#) (Julie’s Bicycle, 2021) and checkout our partner ecolibrium a charity that works with the live events and experience industry to tackle the impact of emissions at events. They specifically target emissions from travel – as this is typically the greatest contributor to carbon footprints – working with members to measure and reduce emissions and offering carbon balancing through verified climate solutions programmes. Collectively their event, festival, supplier and artist members have balanced the equivalent of over 13 million travel miles.

What Next?

1. If you haven’t already, check out these vital resources:
 - Show Must Go On Report (2020) [HERE](#)

³ Source: *Does carbon offsetting work?* Friends of The Earth, Feb 2020, <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/does-carbon-offsetting-work>

- Putting a Price on Carbon (Julie's Bicycle) [HERE](#)
 - ecolibrium – charity tackling emissions from live events and experiences [HERE](#)
 - Vision: 2025 members webinar on Net Zero with Julie's Bicycle and guests from Vision: 2025 and the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change [HERE](#)
 - Julie's Bicycle webinar 'The Road to Zero Carbon' [HERE](#).
2. Create a Net Zero plan - Follow the hierarchy for tackling emissions (*Note: Vision: 2025 Net Zero Plan Template coming soon for members - October 2021*)
 3. Set up your account with the free to use Creative Industry Green Tool to measure your carbon footprint [HERE](#).

And of course, there is more information and inspiration on the Vision: 2025 Resource Hub [HERE](#).