

# Sustainability Plan

2021–24

V&A

“WE ARE ONLY THE  
TRUSTEES FOR THOSE  
WHO COME AFTER US.”

WILLIAM MORRIS

# Introduction

Ambition

Sites

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# Introduction

The V&A is the world's leading museum of art, design and performance, housing a permanent collection of over 2.3 million objects. The Museum holds many of the UK's national collections and houses some of the greatest resources for the study of architecture, furniture, fashion, textiles, photography, sculpture, painting, jewellery, glass, ceramics, book arts, theatre and performance. The V&A is home to 5000 years of human ingenuity in art, design and performance. We champion creative industry, inspire the next generation and enrich everyone's imagination.

Sustainability is crucial to the delivery of the V&A's mission and is already woven into much of what we do. It is at the heart of our role to think about what and how we make and consume, and the effect of this on society and the natural environment.

We have a responsibility to explore the ideas and realities of what environmental, social and economic sustainability means across generations, locations and societies. This is why the Brundtland intergenerational definition of sustainability resonates so clearly with the organisation:

‘SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS  
DEVELOPMENT THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF  
THE PRESENT WITHOUT COMPROMISING  
THE ABILITY OF FUTURE GENERATIONS TO  
MEET THEIR OWN NEEDS.’

# Ambition

The V&A was founded in a time of optimistic belief in the power of industry, a seminal point in history which we now know has had devastating consequences for our planet. At this time of climate and biodiversity crisis, we must bring together art and science to avoid catastrophe and build a sustainable future for all.

We all need to use our imagination and ingenuity to drive sustainability through our place, programme and people, catalysing positive change. We are committed to radical hope, our overarching ambition is:

“TO ENABLE PEOPLE,  
THROUGH ART, DESIGN  
AND PERFORMANCE,  
TO CONTRIBUTE TO A  
THRIVING PLANET AND  
SHAPE SUSTAINABLE  
FUTURES.”

## Place

We will reduce the negative environmental impact of how we deliver our activities and operate our buildings, targeting net zero by 2035 for Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions\*.

## People

We will support our people, partners and sector to embed sustainable decision making and practices, and to share knowledge and skills.

## Programme

We will take a bold approach to engaging our audiences in issues of planetary limits and climate justice, focusing on people’s agency to take positive action.

\*Scope 1: direct greenhouse gas emissions from sources we control or own such as combustion of gas in boilers and fuel in vehicles.  
Scope 2: indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating and cooling.  
Scope 3: indirect emissions from our value chain, upstream and downstream emissions from activities that we do not directly control.

# Sites

## Scope 1 and 2

The primary sites which we own and operate are the Museum in South Kensington and the Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green. Our family of sites will be expanding to include V&A East in Stratford which will be home to V&A East Museum and V&A East Storehouse. Plus a shared space in Blythe House in London which is soon to be vacated.

V&A Museum, South Kensington	V&A East, Stratford
Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green	Blythe House, London

## Scope 3

We have partnership arrangements with V&A Dundee in Scotland, V&A Wedgwood Collection in Staffordshire and the Shekou Design Society in China. We have no direct control over these sites but will look to support our partners in sustainability related activity.

V&A Dundee, Scotland	Shekou Design Society, Shenzhen, China
V&A Wedgwood Collection, Staffordshire	

In addition, we lease retail warehouse space in London and storage space at Dean Hill in Salisbury.

Storage space, Dean Hill, Salisbury
Vision Park, retail storage, London



# International Context

The imperative to act has never been stronger, with international, national and local policy providing leadership, direction and opportunities for the V&A to contribute as part of these communities.

## Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, on 12 December 2015. Its goal is to limit global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius, preferably to 1.5, compared to pre-industrial levels.

The Agreement calls upon signatories to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed to tackle climate change and adapt to its effects.

## United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. They are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

The 17 SDGs are integrated, recognising that action in one area will affect outcomes in others. Development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. Museums are ideally placed to contribute to these goals, we have selected seven in particular:



# National and Local Context

## United Kingdom Climate Change Act

The Climate Change Act was passed in the UK in 2008, committing the UK to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050, compared to 1990 levels. This target was made more ambitious in 2019 when the UK committed to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

The Climate Change Act has formalised the UK's approach to tackling climate change both on mitigation (reducing emissions) and adaptation (increasing resilience to climate change).

## London Environment Strategy

The Mayor's London Environment Strategy (published in 2018) brings together approaches to every aspect of London's environment. It integrates: air quality, green infrastructure, climate change mitigation and energy, waste, adapting to climate change, ambient noise and low carbon circular economy.

In addition, the local authorities where our physical buildings are located, Kensington and Chelsea, Tower Hamlets and Newham all have focused climate action plans.

THE UK GOVERNMENT HAS COMMITTED  
TO BRING ALL GREENHOUSE GAS  
EMISSIONS TO NET ZERO BY 2050

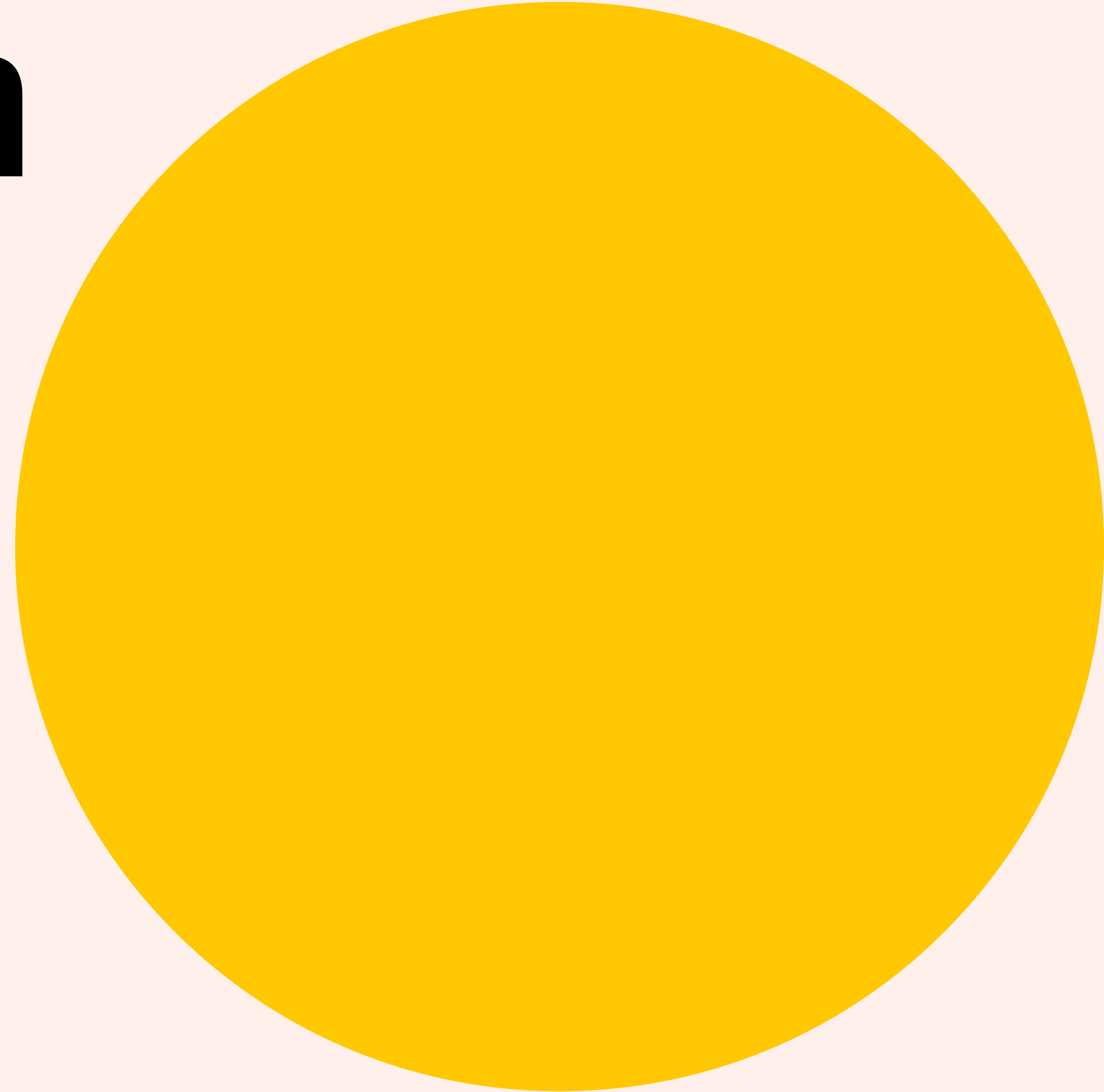


# Our Action

Place

People

Programme



# Our Action

This is a three year plan, setting the foundation for our long term net zero target. Our actions will focus on areas that we can influence and where we can have the most significant positive impact.

We are taking a holistic, systems thinking approach to sustainability, shifting focus from individual parts to understanding influences within the whole organisation and beyond. To help us think more deeply about our activities and how we deliver them, the following priorities provide a framework for our sustainability action.

# Our Action: Place

We will reduce the negative environmental impact of how we deliver our activities and operate our buildings, targeting net zero emissions by 2035 for Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions.

## **Energy and Carbon**

Work towards net zero for Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions in line with the science and goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

## **Materials**

Work to close material loops, focusing on longevity of materials, leasing and use of service packages, reuse and recovery to design out waste and maximise resource value.

## **Procurement**

Procure goods and services responsibly to maximise social, environmental and financial value.

## **Climate Resilience**

Adapt our buildings so they are fit for future climate scenarios, safeguarding appropriate environments for people and objects.

## **Air and Water**

Prevent pollution, minimise potable water use and improve internal and external air quality.

## **Biodiversity**

Deliver net biodiversity gains, valuing nature and supporting conservation.

# Our Action: People

We will support our people, partners and sector to embed sustainable decision making and practices, and to share knowledge and skills.

## **Governance and Leadership**

Provide clear leadership and coordination to integrate principles and practices of sustainability in the organisation.

## **Staff and Volunteers**

Harness the enthusiasm, creativity and expertise of our staff and volunteers to embed sustainable practices across the organisation.

## **Partnerships**

Collaborate across departments and sites, building productive relationships with each other, our partners, funders and audiences.

## **Community**

Share our knowledge, skills and experience with the cultural and heritage sectors and beyond, locally, nationally and globally.

# Our Action: Programme

We will take a bold approach to engaging our audiences in issues of planetary limits and climate justice, focusing on people's agency to take positive action.

## **Collections**

Use our collections to explore and respond to aspirations around climate change and planetary limits.

## **Learning and Public Programmes**

Deliver learning activities that critically address and build understanding around local and global issues of climate change.

## **Research and Higher Education**

Undertake and disseminate research, teaching and learning related to sustainability issues.

## **Galleries and Exhibitions**

Highlight sustainability in the content and delivery of galleries, temporary exhibitions and displays.

# Governance

Governance and Review  
Priority Actions





# Governance and Review

We will take an honest and open approach on our sustainability journey, committing to continuous learning and improvement. Regular monitoring and clear annual reporting on a wider range of sustainability measures will be developed and progress of this plan will be reviewed annually.

The governance structure for this work is as follows:



# 1 Place: in depth

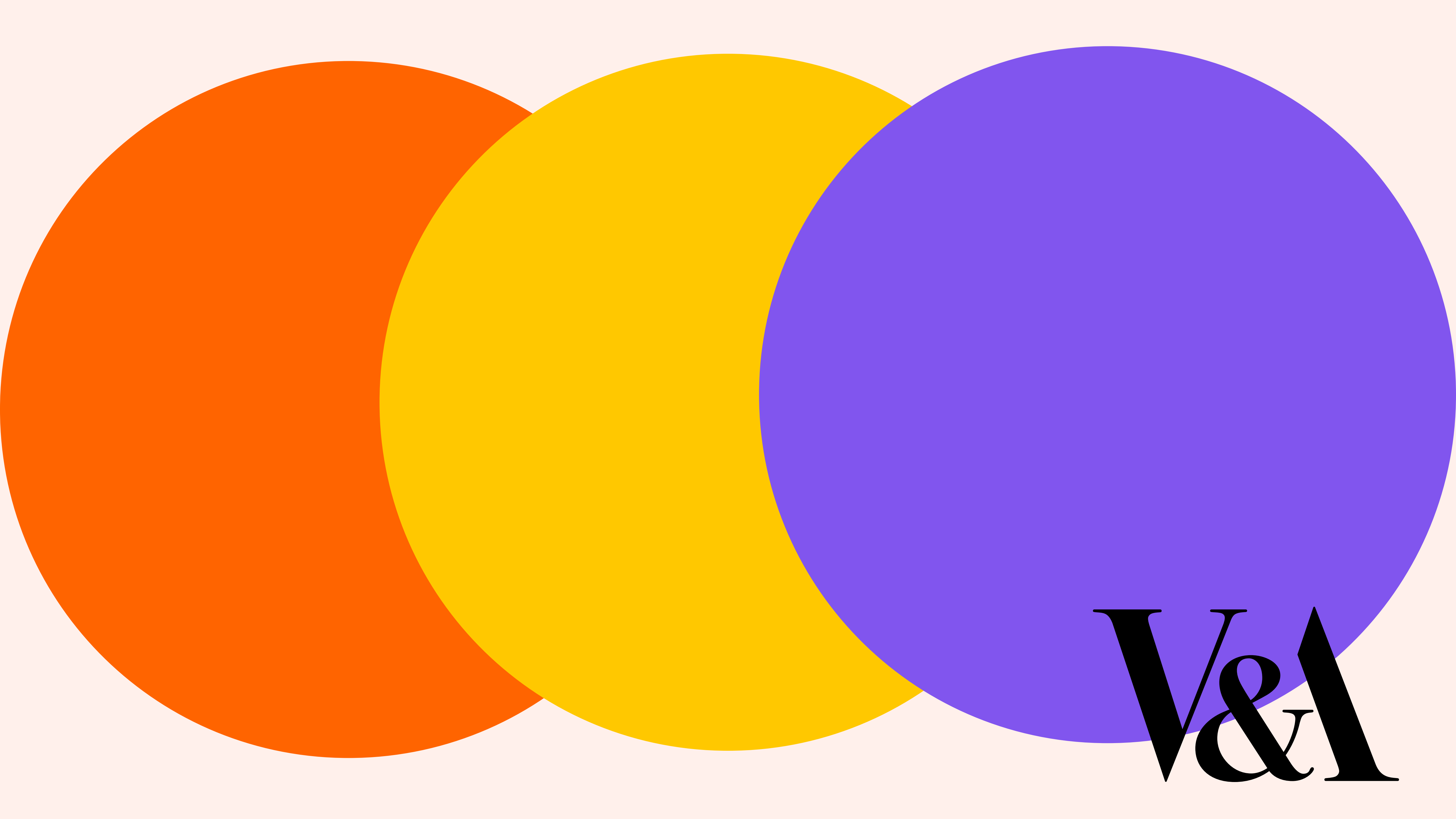
		Focus Area	Priority Action
Energy & Carbon	1.1	Work towards net zero for Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions in line with the science and goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change.	Identify priorities for investment to reduce Scope 1 and 2 emissions and implement measures to align with a 63% on-site reduction target against a 2019/20 baseline by 2035 (not including purchased renewable energy supplies).
			Obtain a greater understanding of our Scope 3 emissions, establish consistent monitoring, and set a reduction trajectory.
			Develop a robust low-carbon travel policy covering business travel, object transport and employee commuting and reduce the carbon footprint from staff travel by 30% by 2022 from pre-Covid baseline.
			Incorporate operational building performance targets into all construction projects.
Materials	1.2	Work to close material loops, focusing on longevity of materials, leasing and use of service packages, re-use and recovery to design out waste and maximise resource value.	Establish monitoring for all material streams to assess and implement avoidance, reduction, reuse and recycling opportunities. Maintain zero operational waste to landfill and set a target for disposed waste for exhibitions and projects.
			Carry out whole-life costing analysis for all design and building projects.
			Produce and implement sustainable design guidelines applicable to all activities.
			Produce a sustainable exhibitions toolkit that empowers users to make more environmentally and socially sustainable decisions throughout the lifecycle of an exhibition.
Procurement	1.3	Procure goods and services responsibly to maximise social, environmental and financial value.	Produce and implement a sustainable events checklist applicable to all V&A events organised.
			Refresh the sustainable procurement policy.
			Build meaningful sustainability criteria into specifications, briefs and tenders. Evaluation to include sustainability weighting as part of value and monitoring of sustainability requirements undertaken.
			Engage with ten key suppliers each year to understand their plans for decarbonisation and wider sustainability issues.
Climate Resilience	1.4	Adapt our buildings so they are fit for future climate scenarios, safeguarding appropriate environments for people and objects.	Understand more fully the environmental impact of our catering and retail functions, and work with suppliers to further improve sustainability performance.
			Undertake a whole-organisation climate risk assessment to inform prioritisation of adaptation measures.
			Identify priorities for investment in water efficiency and implement appropriate measures to reduce consumption of water by 2% each year against a 2019/20 baseline.
			Consolidate deliveries to our sites in order to reduce vehicle movements and associated air pollution.
Air & Water	1.5	Prevent pollution, minimise potable water use and improve internal and external air quality.	
Biodiversity	1.6	Deliver net biodiversity gains, valuing nature and supporting conservation.	Identify how we can support natural biodiversity across our sites.

## 2 People: in depth

		Focus Area	Priority Action
Governance & Leadership	2.1	Clear leadership and coordination to integrate principles and practices of sustainability in the organisation.	Sustainability Steering Group to report half-yearly to Executive Board considering contemporary and emergent risks, opportunities and challenges.
			Examine our income, investments, and pensions to identify socially and environmentally responsible options.
Staff & Volunteers	2.2	Harness the enthusiasm, creativity and expertise of our staff and volunteers to embed sustainable practices across the organisation.	200 staff learning hours of outcome-based sustainability focused learning and development undertaken each year across the organisation.
			Support a thriving staff Sustainability Coordinators network including at least forty departmental representatives.
Partnerships	2.3	Collaborate across departments and sites, building productive relationships with each other, our partners, funders and audiences.	Engage with 5 key partnerships each year to assess alignment with our sustainability ambition.
Community	2.4	Share our knowledge, skills and experience with the cultural and heritage sectors and beyond, locally, globally and nationally.	Collaborate with peers to generate insight and innovation in museums practice, producing at least one major output each year.

# 3 Programme: in depth

		Focus Area	Priority Action
Collections	3.1	Use our collections to explore and respond to aspirations around climate change and planetary limits.	Actively collect, display and research existing objects that link to the climate crisis, sustainability, and the environment.
			Consider environmental impact of acquisitions in our decision-making process, reducing carbon emissions associated with acquisitions by 30% by 2024 against a pre-Covid baseline.
Learning & Public Programmes	3.2	Deliver learning activities that critically address and build understanding around local and global issues of climate change and sustainability.	Organise activities, develop resources and promote sustainability through design-based museum learning for young people, communities, primary, secondary and college students, teachers, adult learners and families resulting in at least 5000 instances of engagement every year.
			Identify the top 3 environmental impacts in the delivery of Learning activities, set reduction targets and communicate these internally and externally.
Research & Higher Education	3.3	Undertake and disseminate research, teaching and learning related to sustainability issues.	Support sustainability-themed research projects, affiliations and research residencies for artists, designers and makers.
Galleries & Exhibitions	3.4	Highlight sustainability in the content and delivery of galleries, temporary exhibitions and displays.	Identify opportunities for addressing issues of sustainability in exhibition content, interpretation or associated programmes within the business case.



**V&A**