

Green Touring in Practise:

Lessons from *Fault Lines* by Lîla Dance

A human, honest and practical guide for small arts companies
Commissioned by house southeast theatre network

July 2026



Fault Lines photo by Jess Hawkins, dancers Joe Darby, Luke Brown, Madison Burgess, KJ Mortimer, Hattie Musgrove

Hello from Lila Dance

This touring pack, commissioned by house southeast theatre network, was written by Lila Dance and brings together everything we learned, while making our work *Fault Lines* in 2023 and touring it between February 2024 and November 2025.

Lila Dance is a small Dance Theatre Company founded in 2005 located in the South West of England. We tour to dance houses, village halls, theatres, arts centres and school halls both nationally and internationally. We also take our outdoor work to festivals. We have two Artistic Directors Abi Mortimer and Carrie Whitaker and a producer, Lou Rogers. We are a small, friendly, hard working team, who do everything from marketing to finance to tour booking. We work with talented freelancers who bring their own creative magic to each production from dancers to dramaturgs to designers.

Fault Lines was the first work we created that placed the climate crisis at the centre of the

project, both artistically and strategically, and this is a first-hand account of the joys, mistakes, unexpected wins, and logistical struggles we encountered; essentially, the lessons we learned on the job, and the lessons we wish we had known from the start.

This resource is written for small arts organisations who want to tour more sustainably without losing sight of artistic ambition, company wellbeing, or financial reality. This is not a glossy report boasting how green we were. It's a lived account of what we actually did, why we did it, what went wrong and how you might, hopefully, avoid some of our pitfalls.

We hope that through sharing this, we can help your touring experience to be easier to plan and more sustainable.

**With love,
Lila Dance x**



Fault Lines photo by Carrie Whitaker, dancer Madison Burgess

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1. Balancing Quality, Sustainability, and Budget: The Creative Pyramid

Touring a dance or theatre production sustainably requires intentional design from the outset, not retrofitting. Designing your green tour is often a balancing act, and we like to think of it as a pyramid of considerations: Quality, Sustainability, and Budget. Each corner of this triangle is vital but rarely can all three be maximised at once.

- A high-quality and sustainable production may demand extra resources, planning, or time, making it less budget friendly.
- A budget-friendly and sustainable approach can work, but careful thought is required to ensure the artistic quality does not suffer.
- A high-quality, budget-conscious production may still carry hidden environmental costs if sustainability is overlooked.

Balancing these priorities can be tricky and sometimes frustrating, but it often leads to unexpected creative solutions and stronger teamwork. By embracing constraints, unexpected benefits emerge that go far beyond what any budget line or production value can measure.

For *Fault Lines*, this approach led to:

- A stronger sense of community within our cast and crew, built through shared responsibility and problem-solving
- New partnerships with like-minded organisations that continue to support our work
- Financial savings in some areas, thanks to advance planning, resource-sharing, and the generosity of collaborators. In areas such as travel, accommodation, and set, overall we actually spent less than on our previous tour through thinking sustainably. This was unexpected and very welcome!

2. Embedding Sustainability in the Artistic Vision

Sustainability was not treated as an add-on, but as a core principle of both the content and delivery of *Fault Lines*. We discussed the design, tour, theme, narrative and all the work around it be as sustainable as possible from day one. The work itself explored environmental themes, ensuring that the production's message aligned with its methods. By integrating environmental concerns into the artistic content, we encouraged audiences to reflect on their own behaviours, extending the impact beyond the performance.

We knew that we wanted the work to be accessible, so we involved our partners and audience from day one, talking to them about how they felt about what we called 'climate emergency overload'. There is so much about climate change in the press, in books and on our TV sets that we felt people often switch off. We wanted to talk to people about how they felt, what was happening locally and to create a show that filled them with hope and left them feeling empowered in what they could do. We wanted to share with them what we were doing so that they could see it was possible.

By taking this approach:

- The work spoke to audiences' lived realities
- We modelled greener touring practices that audiences could actually see
- We avoided doom, guilt and despair, and instead strengthened collective action.

3. Designing for Low-Impact Touring

We deliberately designed a production that could fit into a single suitcase.

Our guiding principle: If it can be lighter, smaller, or second-hand, do it.

Our low-impact design choices:

- Digital set stored in one suitcase (the suitcase was a prop from a previous show).
- Essential equipment, light enough to be carried by hand, or in our own bags.
- Borrowed or upcycled digital kit:
 - Two projectors sourced from Facebook Marketplace
 - Second-hand light sources (torches used from previous shows, lighting equipment we already had or that venues would have).
- Costumes sourced from charity shops or Vinted, adapted and repaired throughout the tour.
- Materials reused rather than recycled:
 - Costumes were donated to a university costume cupboard for further use post tour.
- Projectors always used on eco mode, reducing energy use by around 70%. Whilst this caused some reduction in light intensity it didn't seem to impact the images projected.
- Using projectors and torches instead of full lighting rigs to also cut venue energy usage.

Ultimately, this process reflects the reality of Balancing the Creative Pyramid: Quality, Sustainability, and Budget. Each decision required careful negotiation between these three priorities, with no single point ever fully maximised.

Instead, the production found its strength in how these elements informed one another, where sustainability shaped creative choices, budget constraints encouraged resourcefulness, and quality emerged through intention rather than excess. By working with attention to finding a balance, the pyramid became less of a limitation, and more of a framework for innovation, resulting in a tour that was environmentally conscious and had artistic integrity.

A cautionary tale...

Rechargeable batteries are great until one explodes. One overheated in a suitcase left in direct sunlight. Fortunately, nothing caught fire - but it was a wake-up call:

Second hand tech and recyclable batteries need care, monitoring and good storage practices.



Travel to Edinburgh Carrie Whitaker



Fault Lines Photo by Chloe Hashemi, dancer Luke Brown

4. Travel and Touring Logistics

Travel is where most of the production's carbon footprint sat - so this is where we made the biggest changes.

Our travel hierarchy:

1. Trains, walking, and public transport
2. Car sharing (only when absolutely necessary)
3. Local lifts from community members (total game changer in rural areas).

We did call to arms to the rural touring networks we were touring through - asked local audiences and partners to mirror their travel with ours. For example, if someone was already passing a train station on their way to work, could they pick up the cast without creating an additional journey. This worked well and most volunteers and venue staff were up for helping.

We also embraced slow travel. For example we were invited to be part of Aarhus Dance Festival 2024 which required us to travel to Denmark, therefore we travelled by train rather than flying. This is fun but can also be tough! Watch a video Abi made after 20 hours on a train [here](#).

From the outset, it was essential that everyone involved in the project understood and supported our commitment to greener travel. Setting these expectations early ensured a shared responsibility and a collective commitment to reducing the environmental footprint of the tour.

One-night stands...is there another way?

For us, multiple nights at one venue or a more geographically clustered tour schedule often felt like a greener model, particularly in terms of reducing company travel between dates. In practise, however, many venues could only book a one-night performance, and that financial reality shaped the route we were able to take.

This sometimes meant long journeys between venues, even when we were travelling by public transport. At the same time, audience travel is more complex and harder to measure, so we do not want to make broad assumptions about which model is always most sustainable overall. What our experience highlighted is that there can be a tension between reducing company travel and maintaining local access for audiences. For us, this points to a wider touring-system challenge rather than a simple company-level solution.

Live streaming

Live Streaming is a great green way to share work, but it takes planning. We found that the venues we approached were not typically well set up for Live Streaming, and if they were, didn't necessarily have an active online audiences cultivated for it already. Great in principle, but for us it didn't work in practice. Only one venue out of the 21 we approached took up the offer of Live Streaming.



Travel to Denmark Natalie Rowland

Key Learnings on Travel

- Sustainable travel costs more and takes longer. Budget for it from the start and get venues on side. All venues should have a sustainability policy, especially if they are NPOs so work with them to support their own ambitions.
- UK trains are expensive; advance booking helps but requires intense scheduling.
- Producer time increases dramatically when planning low-carbon routes.
- Venues need to share responsibility. Aarhus (Denmark) did this brilliantly, offering financial and admin support.
- Rural public transport is inadequate; staying for a longer time in one place often became necessary simply due to time gaps and what time you have to start the day.
- Bringing bikes on trains can help, if dancers/partners are happy to cycle part of their journey. But be aware you can only take bikes on trains at off peak times.
- Geography matters. Some routes looked green on paper but were impossible on the ground.
- In the end, we chose to end the tour of *Fault Lines* while it still had bookings because the tour pattern became environmentally unsustainable. Dates were too spread out, too far apart. This was heartbreaking but necessary. But we also acknowledge that we toured to 31 venues (sometimes for more than one night!) and over 21 months. It was a brilliantly successful tour.



Fault Lines photo by Carrie Whitaker, dancer Madison Burgess



5. Flexible and Localised Casting Models

This was one of the biggest carbon savers.

What we did:

- Worked with local professional dancers
- Did not consider dancers at audition who were requiring international flights to be part of the project (and were open and honest in our casting process)
- Used local community casts to embed the work in each place - they became part of the performance meaning their friends and family connected more meaningfully to the show and its message.
- Replaced international performers with Danish-based dancers when touring Denmark.

Two cast models

- Cast of 6 – full experience
 - Cast of 3 – low-impact version for small/rural venues
- This flexibility meant:
- More bookings
 - More accessibility for smaller venues
 - Lower travel emissions
 - Reduced costs.

Additional choices

- Only one lead artist travelled for community workshops (previously we have sent two)
- Dancers were paid for “away days” to reduce unnecessary repeat travel between teaching and performing days. As they couldn’t work on these days it was a bonus paid rest day!

Key Learnings

- Having two cast models was a massive selling point and a game changer for us. We could upscale where needed and be light on our feet for rural and small venues. We could always say yes to a booking
- Consider auditioning only within a specific geographic radius, that is close to where you are creating/rehearsing your work
- Hire dancers willing to live away from home temporarily during creation and touring including the “away day” set up which may impact other commitments. Discuss this early on in the process
- Paying dancers for away days to cut environmental impact with travel does impact your budget
- In future, we’ll explore digitising community cast content, still working with them in an in-depth way but capturing face-to-face engagement in film so it will tour as part of the show and still be embedded into the professional production.

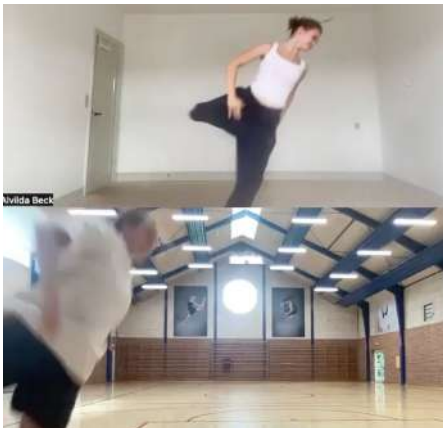
6. Digital Working and Remote Collaboration

Digital tools saved us countless miles. Especially rehearsing the Danish dancers online. We made sure to hold as many lead creative team meetings online as possible. When we did meet in person we chose the central point that was available to reach on public transport.

Examples:

- Remote rehearsals with international dancers. We used Zoom and paid for a license to use it over extended periods.
- Online auditions
- Home-learning packs (video + digital resources)
- Live-streamed sharings to promoters. This was very successful and we secured most bookings without promoters having to travel. Plus, they appreciated this as their entire day wasn't taken up by travelling somewhere across the country to watch a one hour sharing.

Digital tools didn't replace everything, but they replaced enough to make an impact.



Denmark remote rehearsals

7. Accommodation and Living Practices

We made choices about how we lived on the road:

- Sharing twin rooms (only with clear consent and in contracts) to reduce property size and cost and using Airbnb's rather than hotels who use much more energy.
- Staying in homestays where possible. This is a rural touring scheme set up to accommodate artists with local community.
- Using fully equipped accommodation meant cooking was an option for the company, and created more opportunities for shared meals with minimal waste.

Key Learnings

Post-pandemic, homestays became harder to organise.

Friends-of-friends, local personal contacts and warm introductions work best. A lot of these homestays also fed us and included us in their dinner plans which helped environmentally (and budget wise!)

8. Food, Energy Use & Collective Care

Food is often left out of sustainable touring conversations, but it shouldn't be. It was a large part of the sustainability conversation for us.

What we did:

- Always booked accommodation that had a kitchen and space for everyone to eat together.
- Created a shared stock cupboard (teas, coffee, oils, salt, pepper, milk, chocolate (that's an essential right)).
- Always having a kettle in the rehearsal space/ access to one in a venue. Cuts down on terrible take away drinks non recycling cups.
- Cooked and ate together (reducing cost and energy use).
- Partnered with UK Harvest, who donated huge food parcels, covering around 80% of food for six weeks of creation. This was a HUGE gamechanger. We donated a small amount of money to UK Harvest each week and on a Monday, Abi would go and collect food from them that had been saved from supermarkets, takeaways and restaurants that would otherwise go to landfill. This covered all our meals during rehearsals and when we were touring near to a UK Harvest hub. One week they even gave us a load of KFC (so it wasn't all healthy veg).
- We integrated food waste messaging into our outreach to ensure our community cast didn't bring takeaways and single use plastic into workshop spaces and educated them on why this was important.

This wasn't just practical - it was bonding. Eating together created a sense of family and stability on the road.

9. Reducing Waste Materials & Packaging

We committed to:

- No plastic or disposable packing materials.
- Using reusable containers and kit - most of our packaging was old blankets from previous shows and suitcases that were props we owned. And as we've said, all kit we purchased was second hand.
- Packing carefully to avoid breakage or last-minute buying (packing plans help).

Small decisions make big cumulative impact.



Fault Lines photo by Carrie Whitaker, dancers Amy Morvell and Joe Darby

10. Marketing & Communications

We adopted a digital-first marketing model:

- No printed programmes. We travelled two Reusable A3 posters that had QR codes linking to digital programme. At each space we would put these posters up with Blu Tack and take them away with us to reuse. Our posters were not laminated so that they could be recycled at the end of the tour. They had to be taken care of to avoid tearing.
- Very limited printed flyers
- All printing on recycled/recyclable stock
- E-tickets encouraged
- Digital marketing specialist used for reach over print quantity
- All audience feedback done online

Key Learnings

One venue had thrown all our reusable posters into the bin at the end of the show when we went to collect them, meaning we had to re-print our posters. We tried to always go and talk to the front of house staff to explain the ethos of the show and the process if this was possible.

A reminder:

Not all staff teams are briefed on environmental aims unless the venue leads that communication.



Poster in Denmark

11. Green Rider & Audience Responsibility

We created a **Green Rider** which:

- Asked venues to encourage audiences and community cast to travel sustainably
- Asked the community cast to not bring single use plastic into the space
- Asked audiences to bring reusable cups (hot and cold)
- Requested water refill points at all venues (jugs etc so audiences don't need to use plastic cups).

This positioned sustainability as shared, not just an artist responsibility. Our green rider is included in this pack.



Fault Lines photo by Carrie Whitaker, dancers Ivan Merino-Gasper and Luke Brown

Key Learnings

We offered meetings to discuss the Green Rider with venues.

Only **one** venue accepted. A large number of venues were small and their reason they were unable to attend out meeting was that staff were part time and didn't have capacity to deal with any additional work. One thing that was clear is that a lot of venues needed more resource to be able to meaningfully respond, or work with, our Green Rider and ultimately our shared commitments, as a sector, to sustainability. The lack of engagement left us questioning how organisations support their staff in upholding sustainable values and ambitions, which are often included in their organisational policies? And how can we better work together as companies and venues to refocus the time and resource that we have? We need sector-wide improvement.

12. Audience Engagement & Behaviour Change

We invited audiences to take small actions:

- Online feedback forms included environmental pledges. These were small pledges that everyone could get on board with and we only asked them to choose one. Could you always travel with a keep cup/ refillable water bottle, could you cut down on takeaways, could you leave your car at home more and walk or get the train/ bus? We know that audiences really embraced this and wanted to talk to us in post-show discussions about what small changes they could make.
- Post-show conversations encouraged personal reflection and really helped the theme of the show embed in people's minds. Once they learnt how we had actually made the show they really embraced trying to make changes. Lots of people wanted us to go and talk to their company, perform at their school or attend their conference – which we would have loved to have done, but needed further funding to do so.
- Workshops focused on both art and environmental action. Participants felt really moved by their section in the show and we got so much positive feedback about how it had changed their way of thinking.

What we learned

- QR codes alone are not enough. Audiences tend to ignore them. Verbal invitations dramatically increase participation. We added a post-show section, where one of the performers would explain how important it was to use the QR code and complete the short survey. We also mingled with audiences after the show to ask for feedback and talk to them face-to-face.

- Encouraging post-show chats and hosting discussions broadened the conversation and deepened impact. Recording Vox Pops on how people felt were great advocacy tools.
- The post-show discussions also offer a deeper connection between us and the venue. Some hosted the post-show discussions and gave time and energy to designing questions that could help the audience further engage with the work. On reflection we could have probed them a little to discuss their own green policy and share this with their local community to complete the circle.



Fault Lines photo by Carrie Whitaker, dancer Alvilda Beck



13. Knowledge Sharing & Sector Influence

Throughout *Fault Lines*, we were continually learning. We were working out how to do things better, identifying what was and wasn't working, and adapting as we went. Knowing that we all need to get on board with sustainable practices in order to make change, we shared our learning through:

- Social media
- Panels and interviews
- Direct conversations
- Blog posts and video diaries.

Being open about what didn't work was key. This created stronger partnerships and collective progress.

Key Learnings

A small company doing this without adequate resourcing will face some really tough moments.

Honesty and shared understanding are essential. By being transparent about both successes and challenges, we contributed to a wider culture of sustainable practice in the sector.

14. Legacy & Educational Resources

To extend the impact of *Fault Lines* sustainably:

- We created a digital education pack for schools, downloadable (and free) on our website and available to anyone who wants it
- We recorded online workshops that can be bought very cheaply for £5 each for schools, dance groups and HEI's to use. They can download them and use them forever
- We budgeted to have a high-quality film made of *Fault Lines* when the dancers were already in residency (reducing travel). This resource will soon be available on [our online store](#) so the show has a continued legacy.

This approach demonstrates how digital resources can support both access and sustainability, ensuring that engagement is not limited by geography or the environmental cost of touring.



Fault Lines photo by Jess Hawkins, dancers KJ Mortimer, Luke Brown, Amy Movell, Hattie Musgrove, Madison Burgess



HovabourDave, Beaford community cast

15. Measuring Impact

Measuring environmental impact helps:

- Build legacy
- Improve future tours
- Evidence change to funders and partners.

You may want to include your own metrics, but here are the categories we used:

Impact Metrics to Consider

- **Carbon reduction:**
 - Reduced flights
 - Train use
 - Car shares
 - Greener accommodation
 - Digital replacing travel
- **Cost savings:**
 - Advance bookings
 - Shared resources
 - UK Harvest/donated goods
- **Audience engagement:**
 - Number of pledges
 - Downloads of digital resources
 - Workshop participation
- **Journaling & qualitative documentation:**
 - Video diary examples (e.g., “Abi on the train to Denmark”)
 - Reflections on lived experience.

We agreed that we would measure against previous tour data as our baseline and also measuring against less environmentally friendly ways of travelling (e.g. carbon saved by not flying to Denmark, getting the train to Devon and not driving etc). The more we share our experiences and show the sector the issues and the positive contributions, the more as a collective we can make a difference.

We’ve shared links to useful websites and tools that help with measuring your environmental impact. You can see our figures on our impact [video HERE](#).

Key Learnings

Most impact tools are designed for large organisations and some that we initially found useful for personal impact (such as Better Points) didn’t seem to have large financial backing and became difficult to use/ obsolete or weren’t suitable to use as a team. We used a variety of tools and websites to measure what we could and didn’t give up. But we believe that our anecdotal evidence was in a way more valuable, so keep recording in any way that you can.



Travel to Edinburgh via train from St Pancras Station

16. Risk & Contingency Planning

Sustainable touring can add new risks.

Our hard-won lessons:

- **Digital sets** are brilliant until they fail - always back up your show file. We had ours on mini mac + USB + spare iPad. All second hand.
- **Rechargeable batteries** can explode. Monitor charging, avoid heat exposure.
- **Public transport delays** can derail a day. Always book earlier trains than needed.
- **Second-hand tech can break?** Carry tools and have someone who can fix things (we used a soldering iron pre-show more than once).
- **Second-hand costumes** tear easily. Carry a sewing kit and know who can use it. It’s useful to have a sewing machine in the rehearsal studio and someone who can use it.
- **Let go of perfection.** We gave up taking our own dance floor from the start, so we didn’t have to travel in a van, adapted to what was available and even enjoyed the aesthetic quirks it created.



HowaboutDave. Beaford community cast

17. Staff & Artist Wellbeing

Greener touring can be physically and mentally demanding. It takes longer to organise and plan logistics, and you are often problem solving

Wellbeing strategies we used:

- Paying artists fairly for “away days” whilst this enabled us to cut down environmentally on travel, artists couldn’t take other work and we covered this cost.
- Creating clear schedules, especially when travel was slower and making sure that the team had some recovery time after arriving. We sometimes had to say no to things venues/ festivals had organised as we wanted the team to rest for at least half a day after a 20 hour train journey.
- Team-wide conversations about cooking, dietary needs and living preferences.
- Addressing the reality that sustainability asks people to make sacrifices (like refusing single-use cups when they really want a coffee).

Key Learnings

Everyone must be on board. It’s useful to set out right from the start with the team what you want to create and that you need everyone to be on board. Shared rooms, shared meals, slow travel and limited personal space are not for everyone.

Clarity, kindness and transparency go a long way.

18. Partnerships & Networking

We actively sought out partners who shared our environmental values:

- The Green Party and green party members
- UK Harvest
- Julie's Bicycle
- Theatre Green Book
- house southeast theatre network

These relationships:

- Provided practical sustainability advice
- Helped us access new audiences
- Offered shared political understanding and advocacy
- Built a network that outlives the project

Key Learnings

We built more non-dance partnerships on this project than ever before. Environmental organisations are collaborative by nature. They want to help and the mutual benefits are huge.



Fault Lines photo by Dougie Evans, dancer Yanki Yau



Fault Lines photo by Hannah Mulligan, dancer Coralie Calford

Closing Thoughts

Touring sustainably is a journey, not a perfect science. Things will inevitably go wrong, and there will be moments when your best environmental intentions are compromised, whether a prop breaks and needs replacing, an unexpected change forces extra travel, or something simply does not go to plan. That is part of the reality.

What matters most is approaching the work with intention, care, and a willingness to adapt. Good planning helps, but so does the commitment to document the whole picture, including the wins, the challenges, and the things that did not quite work. Sharing those honest experiences is essential. If we do not keep saying it and saying it again, people will not come on board. The cause needs champions, and it needs advocates.

Sustainability is as much about mindset, resilience, and creativity as it is about carbon data. Approach the process with curiosity and generosity, and the positive impact will reach far beyond the numbers, into your team, your audiences, your partners, and the places you visit.

Good Luck and break a leg! We'd love to hear about your journeys and if our advice has helped. Follow us on Instagram @liladanceuk and share your stories. The more we share the more we can change touring for the better.

We have included these resources:

- Our Green Rider
- Our Environmental Action Plan
- Links to useful websites including some of our blogs and our page on *Fault Lines*
- Our Education pack download.



Fault Lines photo by Chloe Hashemi, digital image Courtney McCarthy

Additional resources

[Recording of Abi on a Denmark Train](#)

[Fault Lines impact](#)

[Green Rider Fault Lines Tour 2023](#)

[Useful Sustainability resources](#)

[Lila Dance Environmental Action Plan](#)

[New Education Pack](#)

[Fault Lines reviews](#)

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