

Case Study: Shakespeare North Playhouse

Using Play to Build a Shared Sustainability Strategy

Shakespeare North Playhouse had already been making strides in sustainability across departments, but in early 2024 the organisation wanted to create a more unified, staff-led environmental strategy. To support this, **Andy Kelly, Visitor Experience Manager**, met with every department and quickly identified that staff engagement would be key. Rather than imposing a top-down strategy, the goal was to create something shaped by everyone — from volunteers to directors.

To do this, Shakespeare North became one of the first organisations in the UK to use the **Sustainability in the Arts board game**, a tool designed to start conversations and generate ideas around five key areas of sustainability: **Artistic, Social, Human, Ecological, and Economic**. The session brought together staff at all levels to share their values, challenges, and priorities in a creative and collaborative way. The outcome was a set of realistic, impactful actions to guide both immediate and future efforts.



These staff-driven priorities form the foundation of the organisation's new **Environmental Strategy**, with short-term goals planned for the coming year and long-term ambitions set through to 2030.

Progress Highlights:

- **Solar power generation:** The building has generated **17,912 kWh of solar energy** since opening, equivalent to around **179,120 cups of tea**.
- **Sustainability Hub:** A new internal digital hub, launched in June 2025, centralises resources, shares updates, and showcases staff-led initiatives. A public-facing sustainability page is also in development.
- **Beekeeping and community food:** Rooftop beehives have produced 80 jars of honey, sold on-site. Plans are underway to expand hive capacity and incorporate the honey into seasonal dishes in the Bar & Kitchen.
- **Community seedbox project:** A new initiative invites local residents to collect, grow, and share seeds, supporting biodiversity, food knowledge, and stronger community ties to the venue.
- **Digital Sustainability Framework:** Launching in July 2025, this framework embeds sustainability principles across programming, procurement, and operations.

Looking ahead: In autumn 2025, a sustainability-themed exhibition will accompany *The Tempest*, using performance, storytelling, and behind-the-scenes insights to engage audiences in environmental themes in an accessible, meaningful way—part of a wider effort to reach Theatre Green Book Baseline standard by the end of 2026.

Shakespeare North is building a lasting culture of sustainability — guided by the voices and values of its people and community.



Written and photographs by Andy Kelly.