

GREEN RIDER

PILOT SCHEME REPORT





In collaboration with

Azana Productions
BAFTA albert
BBC
Brontë Film & TV
Climate Spring
Equity
Hat Trick Productions
LowKey Films
Mono Film Productions
On the Edge
Picture Zero
Playground Entertainment
Potboiler Productions
Pulse Films
Rebel Park Prodcutions
Vantage Point
Wainbrave Productions
WWT
Yellow Dot Studios

BACKGROUND

In August 2023, ‘actor-vists’ from Equity for a Green New Deal launched a talent-led Green Rider campaign at the Edinburgh TV festival. Building from work done by BAFTA albert in 2020, the Equity Green Rider was created - a union-backed template that actors could amend and attach to their contracts, with clauses to help reduce pollution in our industry. The Green Rider was accompanied by a ‘Handshake’, laying out how production and talent could collaborate to make these vital changes happen. Our most up-to-date Handshake is available [here](#).

The Equity Green Rider was then trialled on 5 major TV productions: **Wolf Hall: The Mirror and the Light** (Playground), **Strike: Ink Black Heart** (Brontë Film & TV) and the pilot of **Smoggie Queens** (Hat Trick) from the BBC. From Sky: **Gangs of London** (Pulse Films) and **Funny Girl** (Rebel Park & Potboiler Productions). The Pilot also included 3 short films: **Spirit of Place** (WainBrave Productions, LowKey Films & On The Edge in association with WWT); **There Will Come Soft Rains** (Azana Productions & Mono Film Productions); and **More Flames** (WainBrave, Vantage Point, Climate Spring, Yellow Dot Studios).

Most of these productions were already taking part in a carbon action plan, either via [BAFTA albert](#) or [Green Screen](#). The additional steps taken to be part of the pilot were:

- Identifying a Green Rider Rep within the cast - ideally Number 1 on the callsheet.
- Using/amending the existing Equity Green Rider and Handshake to find goals that felt achievable for both actor and production. *Note: In most cases, the Equity Green Rider was not used as a contractual or legally binding tool.*
- Sending the Rider to the cast and engaging as many as possible to sign up to the campaign.
- Hosting at least two working group meetings with cast, production and other departments.

Full guidelines for taking part in the pilot can be found [here](#). Data was gathered from all 8 productions via BAFTA albert reports, Picture Zero data, and production meetings. This report details our findings.



EFFECTIVE ACTIONS

There are countless ways to make your production cleaner and greener - it's easy to get lost in details like what compostable packaging brand to use! Whilst every action we take is important, focusing on key areas like fuel, energy and travel will make efforts go further. Many productions in the UK will already be addressing some of these issues via a carbon action plan. Productions in the pilot scheme also collaborated with [BAFTA albert](#), [Film London](#) and [Picture Zero](#) to drastically reduce their carbon emissions.

What the Green Rider campaign added to this process was vital support from cast, as well as previously unseen cross-department collaboration through the Green Rider Working groups. We have learned that this campaign is both practical and social. It works best when every department is involved and working towards a common goal. Here are some of the most transformative steps productions can take:

Pilot Scheme Report

↑ From the production of 'More Flames'





EFFECTIVE ACTIONS PRACTICAL

Start Planning Early

Sustainability measures are most effective when they are embedded at the earliest planning stages. For example, choosing locations with easy access to reliable public transport, grid energy and electric vehicle charging will make it much easier to reduce pollution on your production once shooting. Allocating a realistic sustainability budget makes it possible to secure sustainable energy, transport and food suppliers early, rather than wrestle with spiralling costs and limited availability later. When budgeting, it’s also useful to consider - “does this distant and remote location **truly** work out cheaper, once we factor in the additional infrastructure we will need to make this production less damaging to nature and climate?”

The Green Rider was introduced at different stages of production during the pilot. It was most effective when brought in long before shooting - as early as script stage in some places. The Green Rider pilot shorts - **There Will Come Soft Rains** (by BAFTA nominated Elham Ehsas), **Spirit of Place** (starring Oscar winner Mark Rylance) and **More Flames** (starring Phoebe Dynevor) - collaborated closely with Climate Spring, an NPO that works to put empowering, solutions-based climate narratives onscreen. Climate Spring helped embed this ethos into the films, from inception to the end product - allowing them to be even more ambitious and imaginative in modelling a greener way of working and telling stories. Discussing impact early on, with your writing team or with companies like Climate Spring, can transform the way a project shoots.



There Will Come Soft Rains [2022]



Spirit of Place [2022]



More Flames [2022]



From the production of 'More Flames'

EFFECTIVE ACTIONS PRACTICAL

Fuel

The diesel generators typically used on film sets release around 500 kg of CO₂ every 12 hours* (that's more than a flight from London to Marrakech**). Productions on the Green Rider pilot scheme aimed for lower emission alternatives, including grid power, electric generators, or generators powered by HVO fuel. On *Funny Woman*, *Strike* and the subsequent series of *Smoggie Queens*, this helped reduce fuel emissions by over 86%. On *Gangs of London*, it was over 80%. Transitioning to green energy suppliers off the set can also be an easy and effective win. On *Wolf Hall: The Mirror and the Light*, production offices ran from 100% renewable energy, and the post-production company used 80% renewable energy.

Energy mismanagement is a high-impact area where behaviour changes can make a big difference. One production measuring power consumption via Film London's Fuel Project found trailers were using large amounts of energy overnight. Efforts were made to implement a 'turn off when not in use' approach - a simple action with potential for huge impact. This discovery highlights the importance of power monitoring to understand your production's energy "hot spots", and engaging cast in small, yet significant actions.

Sources:

* <https://wearealbert.org/2021/10/07/electric-generators-powering-sustainable-sets/>

** <https://co2.myclimate.org/>

*** Data from Picture Zero & BBC Production Wrap Reports (confidential)



Transport & Accommodation

Once productions start shooting, transport and accommodation can become big sources of pollution. The Equity Green Rider features clauses on using public transport, ridesharing and electric vehicles where possible. These had high cast engagement: between 80-90% of actors on Funny Woman, Gangs of London, Smoggie Queens, Strike and Wolf Hall said they would be ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’ to rideshare, while 60-90% said the same about using a 3-way trailer.

***Note:** Actors are encouraged to aim for the most impactful actions possible within their circumstances and amend their rider or handshake on a case by case basis. For example, performers with access needs may find it harder to use public transport, or actors with young children may need to travel home quickly. This should be discussed transparently in all communications.*

Sustainability Leads

Engaging a sustainability lead or team has been an integral part of the pilot process. This could be an outside organisation like [Picture Zero](#), who supported four of the Green Rider pilot productions, or a nominated member of your team. It is important that this person is identifiable to all cast and crew, and can be reached easily. Rather than the role being thrust onto an already overworked junior worker, a sustainability lead should have the authority to make decisions about how the set is run. Productions with a clearly identifiable sustainability team and working group saw far more wins on set, partly because cast and crew knew where to go if they had a concern or were interested in supporting the production’s efforts.

“Engaging a sustainability lead or team has been an integral part of the pilot process.”



From the production of ‘More Flames’

EFFECTIVE ACTIONS
PRACTICAL

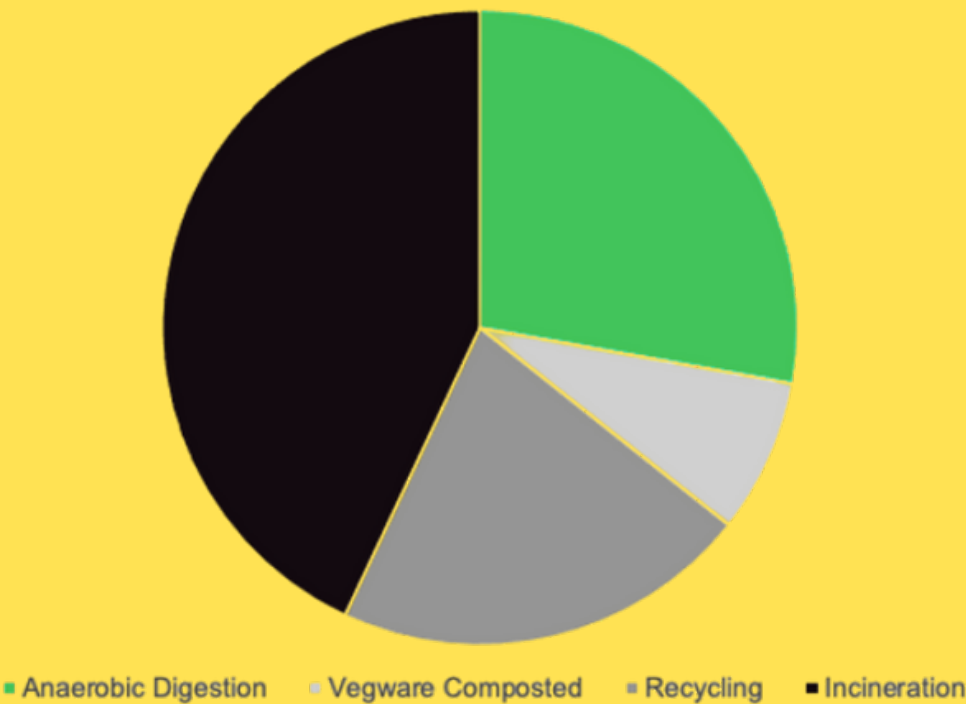


EFFECTIVE ACTIONS PRACTICAL

Managing waste

On-set waste is one of the most visible areas of pollution. A production may be running on entirely clean energy, but if cast and crew observe large amounts of landfill, single-use plastics and food waste, they will get the impression that production doesn't care. Showing that you are disposing of waste properly, with clear systems and signage, is a good visual indicator of your commitment to greening your project, and is something all cast and crew can take part in. On Wolf Hall, a Location One eco-pod was used, meaning around 60% of waste was either recycled, composted, or used to generate energy via anaerobic digestion. On Smoggie Queens, all waste was diverted from landfill. Both productions ran schemes to donate used sets and props to local community schemes, reducing waste footprints by up to 90%.

WOLF HALL TMatL WASTE BREAKDOWN



Food

The gold standard for pollution-free catering is plant-rich, seasonal and sustainably sourced food across all of production. This was achieved on the smaller Green Rider shoots like There Will Come Soft Rains, but was harder to action on bigger projects. This is partly due to a lack of scaleable plant-based catering options, a broad scope of dietary requirements and worries about resistance from cast and crew to going ‘meat free’. If you cannot have an entirely plant-based menu, here are other high-impact wins you can make:

- **Ensure nutritious and tasty plant-based options are available.** This will change cast and crew perceptions of meat-free food. On There Will Come Soft Rains, the team said “our biggest success was the catering, it really broke down many of the misconceptions crew had about vegan food.”
- **Go beef-free.** Beef is up to 20 times more polluting than other meats. Removing it from your menu could halve your catering emissions, whilst still ensuring variety. In a production survey, 74% of cast and 54% of crew were happy with a beef-free menu.
- **Consult cast & crew.** Most of the pilot productions did this via surveys. Involving everyone in these decisions and providing data to back up your proposals will ensure better cast and crew buy-in, and spark the vital collaborative energy we need to take strong climate action



EFFECTIVE ACTIONS

SOCIAL



Engage Cast at Readthrough or Earlier

Sending the [Green Rider Handshake](#) at the point of job offer is a great way of opening up dialogue between cast and production before shooting starts. But projects on the pilot scheme also noted that a lot of the biggest wins happened outside of contracts and negotiations. One very effective tactic was to schedule a sustainability chat at the first cast readthrough. Some of these were attended by the Green Rider team, who led a peer-to-peer chat on why reducing our industry's pollution is important, and what we as actors can do about it. This encouraged discussion and clarified why actions were being proposed. For example, a reduction in private vehicles was seen not as a perk being removed, but as part of a collective effort to reduce pollution.

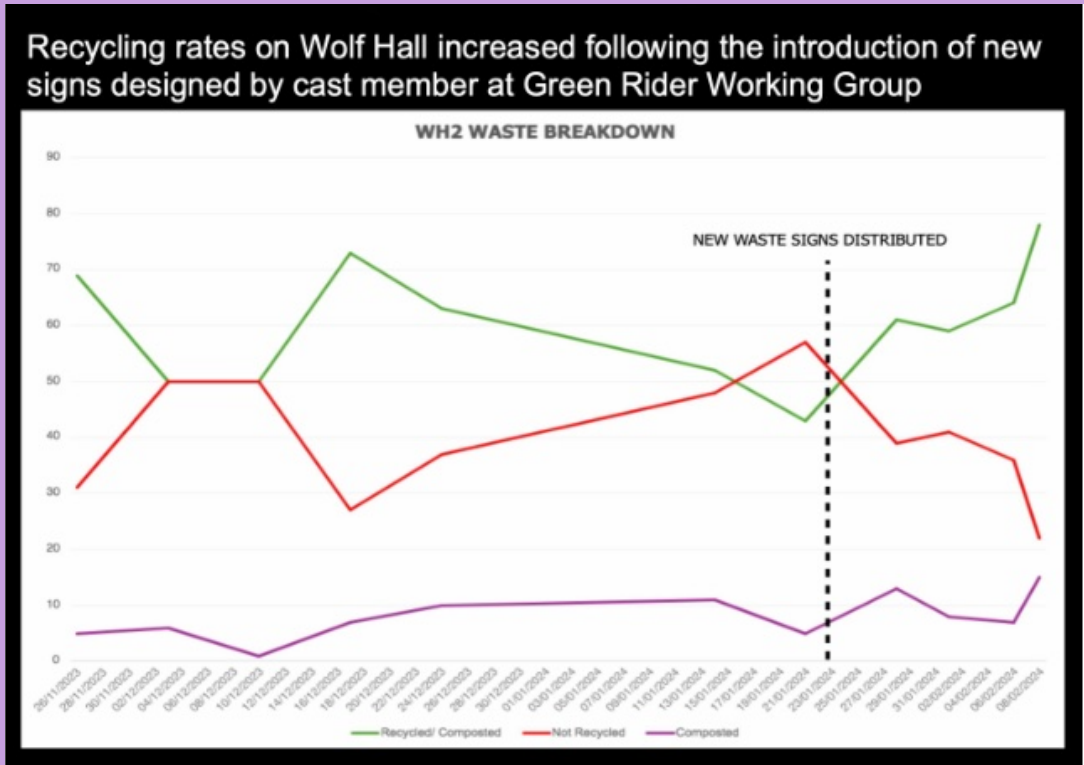
The talk was followed with a questionnaire, which showed high levels of interest in engaging further. Actors were willing to eat less red meat, rideshare, promote a production's green efforts in bonus content and interviews, take trains over planes, and use three-way trailers.*

Sources:
Picture Zero Cast Surveys for Gangs of London, Wolf Hall, Smoggie Queens, and Strike.

A Green Team to Break Down Barriers

Our industry is built on old-fashioned notions of hierarchy. These create barriers between performers, producers, creatives and crew. The most positive feedback from the Green Rider pilot was how transformative a Working Group or Green Team was in fostering cross-department communication. Productions in the pilot had at least two meetings, which included lead cast, producers, heads of department - and ideally talent agents, crew members, and a representative from Equity. Each department gave feedback on how the scheme was going, and offered ideas on how to improve. For example, on Wolf Hall, actors fed back that signage around waste disposal was unclear. This was amended, and production noted a major uptake in proper waste disposal across all departments. Working groups were very effective at generating new ideas and engaging new changemakers.

There was lots of positive feedback from actors, agents, and casting directors who had previously been excluded from conversations around sustainability.





Spirit of Place [2022]

EFFECTIVE ACTIONS SOCIAL

Finding a Cast Spokesperson

Cast have historically been left out of sustainability discussions and decision making. The assumption is that talent should not be bothered or that they will be unwilling to give up their climate-damaging perks. This creates an atmosphere of resentment. If cast (who tend to be the biggest polluters) are not adjusting their behaviour, why should anyone else?

The Green Rider pilot was transformative because for the first time, every production had a lead actor publicly engaging with the issue. This led to increased uptake from the rest of the cast and crew. Notes from one working group meeting stated: *“Defensiveness can come in when people feel like their department is being singled out for more action; that shifts when they see that everyone - including cast - is joining in and updating their ways of working.”*

Some productions noted that having their Number One as the Green Rider spokesperson was at times practically challenging. Despite their enthusiasm, being called every day meant the actor had very little time to join meetings or engage other cast. On one production, other actors volunteered to join the Green Team after hearing about the Green Rider at t Readthrough. This was extremely effective. As core cast, they were on set regularly, but also had more time to engage with any issues cropping up. Striking this balance will help make cast engagement as successful as possible.

Unsure who of your cast to approach about being a spokesperson? Check out the our list of supporters on the Green Rider [website](#). Alternatively, [contact the Green Rider Team](#) for support in approaching actors.



Communication

Within a flurry of changing scripts, call sheets and schedules, it can be difficult for cast and crew to engage with dense literature about climate and nature. Keeping communications simple, short and personal will help engage as many people as possible. Tactics that have worked very well include:

1. Peer to Peer Messaging

An informal, but galvanising message from a lead actors was very effective. These were sent before the first day of filming and invited cast & crew to collaborate as a team in tackling the climate crisis. These messages reinforced the idea that we are all in this together, rather than there being one rule for ‘star talent’ and another for everyone else.

2. Changing language

Research from Potential Energy's [Talk Like a Human](#) guide shows that people engage far more with terminology that applies to their daily lives. For example, words like “decarbonisation” and “net zero” tend to alienate readers, whilst terms like “pollution” and “cleaner air” elicit a more personal response. We may struggle to conceptualise 1.5 degrees of global warming, but we can smell the fumes from a diesel generator. A personal touch can also go a long way. The collective eye-roll about being called in for a “sustainability meeting” shifts if instead, cast & crew are being invited to take part in something new, groundbreaking, and specific to their production, e.g. Cleaning up X Production.

3. Creative approaches

Inviting cast & crew to take part in comms can lead to some creative and ingenious ideas. One production using the Green Rider added a QR code to their callsheet, which linked to a short comedy video involving cast & crew. This was made in collaboration with the production’s sustainability consultant, and was a fun and engaging way of relaying the good work being done.



From the production of More Flames



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Though huge wins were made on this pilot scheme, key areas for improvement were also noted. Included here are some barriers the project faced, and possible solutions for the future.





AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

TRANSPORT

Productions in the pilot reduced their emissions by over 80% by swapping diesel generators for HVO fuel. This meant transport became the highest emitter, accounting for 70% of emissions on one production*. This is partly because productions took care to record all travel, including crew using their own vehicles to get to work, which is often overlooked in carbon reporting.

One cause of high transport pollution is a lack of electrical vehicle infrastructure. There are also cultural issues to be addressed: of the actors surveyed on one production, 77% said they'd be likely or very likely to take public transport to work. On another production, this was only 40%. Reasons cited for needing cars were unsociable hours and a lack of reliable public transport. When working unsociable hours or with high profile artists, safety concerns are also a real issue.

But creative solutions are possible. For example, on one production, a lead cast member explained that the ride to work was their only time to learn lines and prepare for the day.

Source
Picture Zero End of Production Report

The actor suggested that anyone sharing the car with them was notified they would be using journey time to prep and would be unable to interact. This seemed to be a very workable solution.

As productions move away from diesel, travel will be the next biggest hurdle. Engaging actors will be a vital part of reducing these emissions. There are bound to be challenges, but the biggest lesson the pilot scheme has offered is that open discussion with each department can lead to innovative solutions. Get a discussion going. Would actors be willing to travel to fittings and readthroughs on public transport? Would a shared bus to set be helpful? Could overnight stays close to remote locations be organised so cast & crew can travel the day before on public transport?

Striking the balance between addressing legitimate concerns and challenging hierarchical traditions is the work the Green Rider campaign will continue to prioritise through actor engagement (socials, workshops, press and media), continued collaboration with productions using the Green Rider, and collaborations with high-profile actors.



From the production of More Flames



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

PLANNING & BUDGET

Some productions had to adjust their climate commitments due to budgetary restraints. On one production, transitioning to HVO fuel was more costly than originally budgeted. The working groups looked at ways to address these issues: for example, a suggestion was made to move budget away from offsetting and towards procuring more HVO generators. In the end, production scaled down to a hybrid diesel/HVO model.

Issues like this are likely to continue unless a realistic sustainability budget is assigned at the point of greenlight. With major broadcasters pushing for net zero targets, productions must be supported to meet these ambitions. The Green Rider campaign will continue working with big name talent who have the power to push for these vital infrastructure changes on their own productions, setting a precedent for future shows.

TV moves fast, schedules and locations change and sometimes the pollution caused by certain decisions is not realised until after they're made. This can be mitigated with early planning and sharing learnings for future productions. The Green Rider campaign will continue to gather data from productions that take part in the scheme (protecting anonymity where necessary), via BAFTA albert reports and/or confidential debriefs with producers and sustainability leads. We will use this data to evolve and adapt our approach, so we are being as effective and ambitious as possible.

Pilot Scheme Report



From the production of Spirit of Place



From production of More Flames

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT CONSISTENCY OF DATA

At the time of the Green Rider pilot launch, the campaign was volunteer-run by three actors. We worked closely with producers to develop our [pilot guidelines](#), but did not have the resources or time to fully support productions taking part. This meant we were reliant on the huge generosity of the producers, sustainability consultants, actors, heads of department, agents and broadcasters volunteering their time, and we are extremely grateful for all the work done to trial the Rider and bring this campaign to a wider audience.

Our lack of resources also meant productions had to self-report their findings. Each show and film was different, with varying levels of engagement and methods of gathering information. This made it difficult to accurately compare data between each production, and measure which material wins the Green Rider contributed to. We also sometimes struggled to gauge actor engagement beyond the initial cast surveys, as data gathered (naturally) tended to lean towards production and pollution reduction. Though we initially aimed to test the efficacy of the Green Rider as a contractual tool, most productions in the pilot instead opted to use the Handshake as a tool for opening up dialogue between actor and production.

Our campaign has recently been granted funding to continue our work, with aims to expand our team and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign. A valuable lesson going forward is to offer more hands-on support, give production and cast clearer routes for providing feedback, and be a point of contact for actors using the Green Rider Handshake.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

KEEPING IT SIMPLE, ACHIEVABLE AND AMBITIOUS

Responses to the Equity Green Rider document have been mixed, with one sustainability coordinator commenting: *“Cast have limited bandwidth when in production and don’t seem to want to read long documents. I really like the sustainability clause that one cast lead added to his contract which is really simple...something more like this might be easier to get people to engage with.”*

The Equity Green Rider has was designed as a template for best practise, adaptable to each actor and production. The pilot, however, highlighted resistance to the document. Productions already doing a carbon action plan were uneasy about making additional legally-binding commitments. Some actors and agents were put off by dense-looking legal text in already complicated contractual negotiations.

The Green Rider Handshake had better responses due to its shorter length and more collaborative nature. Some reported that it was more effective to use the document as a starting point for collaboration with talent, followed by an invitation to join a sustainability working group. That way, cast could engage more actively and hold production to account, rather than add additional clauses to a contract that may be forgotten.

What the pilot has highlighted is that even when there is engagement from both performers and production, there are barriers to implementing all the terms of the Equity Green Rider. Every actor and production has different resources and requirements. A Green Rider may be dismissed out of hand because production feels the clauses are “not achievable” for them. However, when a Handshake is sent and cross-department meetings set up, innovative ideas are shared and new solutions found.

For the Green Rider team, this presents an opportunity to re-examine our role in the industry and how we can have the biggest impact possible. We are a movement borne from actors’ frustration at seeing sustainability pledges being made but not met on set. We must therefore strike the right balance between supporting the vital work already being done by productions, and using actors’ collective and individual power to push for better. This is why we are working with Equity to negotiate for a comprehensive Green Rider Handshake to be embedded into collective agreements with PACT, making sustainability considerations as commonplace as nudity clauses and empowering working actors to collaborate with productions to make our industry cleaner and greener.

As our campaign expands, we will also look at tactical ways to supercharge the green transition - harnessing ‘star power’ and collective action across the acting community to help make broadcasters and studio commitments to reaching ‘net zero’, happen sooner. Though we will continue to strive for better and hold the industry accountable, this movement is not about making demands, but collaborating towards a common goal.

We will also continue to reflect on and refine our communication, to ensure our messaging is clear and not causing undue concern or confusion. We hope our endorsement from BAFTA albert and other vital industry bodies will reassure the productions that we are part of TV and film’s growing sustainability movement. We are here to help.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT **EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

On one pilot production, 80% of cast members surveyed had never heard of a Green Rider. Much work needs to be done to make this idea as commonplace as intimacy directors are now.

We will achieve this by:

- Making the documents more accessible – shifting from extensive legal language to an easy to understand Handshake that can be amended to actors' situation.
- Creating safe spaces for actors to meet and discuss their experiences, fostering a growing community of engaged performers at all levels.
- Acting as a conduit between production and performers, supporting in communication and negotiations.
- Regular public, press and social media messaging, explaining why these actions are vital.
- Continuing outreach with agents and managers to encourage them to suggest a Green Rider Handshake to their clients.



In one working group, an actor expressed concern on how sustainability might impact some job roles – particularly transport captains, who might not be able to afford an electric vehicle. He wanted to ensure their concerns would be listened to. In another working group meeting, a participant highlighted the challenge of aligning accessibility needs with sustainability requirements for disabled/neurodiverse individuals.

Concerns like this are extremely important, and it is vital working groups create space for these discussions to occur. This could mean expanding working groups to include every department, and inviting those with concerns to voice them in a safe space. The Green Rider campaign will also examine all our communications to ensure it is clear that individuals are able to adjust the Handshake in line with their needs and requirements. As stated in the Green Rider Handshake:

Fairness and equity are a priority. All parties will ensure this agreement does not exacerbate existing hierarchies such as racism, classism, ableism or sexism.



From the production of There Wil Come Soft Rains

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
EQUITY AND FAIRNESS



AIM FOR THE MOON, LAND AMONGST THE STARS

The purpose of this pilot scheme was to gather evidence and learnings to share back with our industry. It was unlikely to go perfectly, and was always intended as an opportunity for feedback and improvement.

We all live within a society still largely run on fossil fuels, and we cannot be perfect. But we must not be dissuaded. Changing a long-established culture of consumption and hierarchy takes time. We strive for progress, not purity. Every time a Green Rider Handshake is used, we are one step closer to building the future we all want.

GREEN RIDER

HOW TO START USING THE GREEN RIDER ON YOUR PRODUCTION

1. Check out our [website](#) for further resources for actors, producers and agents .
2. Contact us at info@green-rider.org if you would like further advice.
3. Communicate your ambitions to your team as early as possible - they may have brilliant ideas to contribute!
4. If you are looking for engaged actors, check out the list of supporters on our [website](#).

www.green-rider.org
info@green-rider.org

