



On-Screen Sustainability Tracking Climate Content

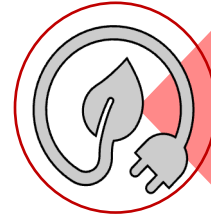
What is Climate Content?

Climate content is about embedding climate-related or adjacent themes into media content in bold, creative, and surprising ways that also feel distinctly Channel 4.

Whether it's drama, reality TV, comedy, or documentaries, it's about tackling sustainability and climate change with authenticity, innovation, and a relatable perspective.

The aim of climate storytelling is to inspire curiosity, spark conversations, and drive action without ever feeling preachy. This could be through normalising sustainable behaviours or creating climate stories that are thought-provoking, accessible and unapologetically entertaining.

Key Aspects of Climate Content:



Intersectional Themes

Climate content isn't just about melting ice caps or extreme weather. It can touch on many intersectional themes that shape how we live, travel, breathe, eat, etc, from innovation to social justice and nature restoration.



Audience Connection

Not everyone will engage with an overt documentary on climate change. Instead, climate themes can be integrated into formats the audience already loves, such as reality TV competitions, home improvement shows, or continuing dramas.



Story-First Approach

The climate message isn't forced; it's naturally embedded within a compelling narrative.



Entertainment with Impact

Uses humour, drama, or emotion to make the content entertaining while subtly introducing climate-related ideas. This ensures that viewers engage with the topic without feeling overwhelmed or lectured.



Call to Action

While not always explicit, climate content storytelling can shift public perception & encourage positive behaviours—and urge governments to act by inspiring audiences to think differently about their choices and demand systemic change.

Climate Content Pledge

In 2021 at COP26, Channel 4 became a founding member of the **Climate Content Pledge**, confirming our commitment to tackling the climate crisis head on through the content we commission and broadcast.

Convened by albert, and signed by the CEOs themselves, the pledge is a rallying cry for broadcasters, streamers and producers to weave climate storytelling into every genre, driving awareness and inspiring action where it matters.



1. We will reach more of our audiences with content¹ that helps everyone understand and navigate the path to net zero and inspires them to make greener choices.
2. We will develop processes that help us to consider climate themes when we are commissioning, developing and producing content.
3. We will ensure that our efforts are informed by the science.
4. We will recognise the importance of fair and balanced representations of visions for a sustainable future.
5. We will work together:
 - learning from and inspiring each other
 - sharing relevant industry and audience insights and developing relevant metrics
 - improving how we measure our impact.
6. We will communicate regularly with our colleagues, partners, and audiences so that we can all play our part in meeting this shared challenge.

Implicit to Explicit Portrayal

CLIMATE PLACEMENT

Climate change is subtly woven into the setting or set design of a story but might not be directly addressed or mentioned.



The Dog House

CLIMATE MENTIONS

Characters mention climate change in passing, normalising talk of the climate crisis in daily life.



This Way Up

CLIMATE THEMES

Climate-related themes drive a story arc or episode in a meaningful way, but the show itself isn't about climate change.



Black Mirror

CLIMATE STORIES

Films and shows that are primarily about climate change.



Joe Lycett's Got Your Back

Implicit:

Through portrayals of sustainable behaviours that aren't directly commented on.

Explicit:

Through specific investigation or discussion of environmental themes, either as the main subject or just incidentally, in passing.

Questions to Consider for Implicit & Explicit Portrayal

- How could your story reflect aspects of our climate-altered world?
- How does climate impact the place the story is set?
- Could you incorporate climate change as a context for the story? Or show your characters navigating their changing relationship with nature?
- Could a climate obstacle provide a narrative twist?
- Could climate change heighten the stakes for your characters?
- How does climate impact your characters psychologically, e.g., are they in denial or experiencing anxiety—and how does this influence their actions?
- How does it impact your characters physically and economically? Does it influence their basic life decisions?
- Could a climate-centred career or backstory help flesh out a primary or secondary character?
- Are there opportunities to depict characters working in climate jobs or for climate solutions large or small?
- Does the story perpetuate harmful archetypes or myths, e.g., that climate change is too big to fix?
- Does the story appropriately attribute responsibility for climate change?
- How will your story leave audiences feeling about climate change?

NRDC uses science, policy, law, and people power to confront the climate crisis, protect public health, and safeguard nature.

Rewrite the Future is an initiative to support Hollywood as it takes on the climate crisis and leverages the expertise of NRDC to help film and television creators represent our climate altered world and the path towards a better future.



Behavioural Change

Choosing low-carbon options, such as car free living, plant- based diets, low- carbon sources of electricity & heating at home as well as local holiday plans can reduce an individual's carbon footprint by up to 9tCo2eq.

Producers can use this framework to explore how these behavioural shifts might fit within their shows or genres, inspiring practical change as well as engaging audiences.

IPCC 6th AR, WG III Avoid, Shift, Improve Framework

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change.

A-S-I Framework

AVOID	SHIFT	IMPROVE
Live car- free	Shift to Public transport	Shift to battery electric vehicle
One less flight (Long return)	Shift to active transport	Produce renewable electricity
Less Transport by air	Vegan diet	Shift to fuel cell vehicle
No pets	Partial shift to dairy/plants/fish	Refurbishment and renovation
One less Flight (medium return)	Vegetarian diet	Shift to plug-in hybrid vehicle
Less car transport	Organic food	Shift to plug-in electric vehicle
Telecommuting	Mediterranean and similar diet	Renewable electricity
Fuel efficient driving	Regional/local food	Heat pump
Less packaging	Service/sharing economy	Shift to a smaller car
Food waste reduction	Sustainable diet (unspecified)	Renewable –based heating
Less animal products	Shift to lower carbon meals	Improved cooking equipment
Food sufficiency	Car -pooling/sharing	Energy and material efficiency
Lower room temperature	Eat out eco friendly	Passive house
Less living space/co housing	Nutrition guidelines diet	Smart metering
Fewer purchases/durable items	Seasonal /fresh food	Better thermal insulation
Less textiles	Walk instead of bus	More efficient appliances
Fewer appliances		Better use of appliances
Bio-plastics/less plastics/chemicals		Produce own food
Less paper		Low carbon construction
Less processed food /alcohol		Recycled materials
Hot water saving		Green roofs
Less energy use (clothing)		Recycle
		Food waste management



Tracking Climate Content

Ed Spec & DRS

Confirmation

Ed Spec & DRS Confirmation Categories

We have updated the Editorial Specification (Ed Spec) and DRS Confirmation (Final production paperwork) to track on-screen sustainability across all our programmes, regardless of genre. The forms include questions aligned with the Climate Content Measurement Form; the industry standard established through the Climate Content Pledge.

ADAPTATION TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

How we are adapting to the impacts of climate change and ensuring climate resilience

- Flood defences; cooling for cities; drought resilient crops; migration/managed retreat etc

CAUSES OF CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURE LOSS

The industries and behaviours that are causing climate change and nature loss

- Fossil fuel use, unsustainable diets, over-consumption, deforestation etc

CLIMATE SCIENCE/ NATURE LOSS/IMPACTS

Is Climate Change having an impact already?

- Extreme weather events such as heat waves, wildfires, droughts, intense storms and flooding.
- Events being cancelled or altered; travel plans changing because of extreme weather and/or air pollution.
- Relocation due to climate impacts.
- Physical health impacts of climate change, eg heatstroke and heat exhaustion, or asthmatics and air pollution.
- Mental health impacts of climate change – climate anxiety, stress and grief for loss of the natural world (particularly relevant for young people or those who have experienced extreme weather eg flooding).
- Migration, species decline or extinction, food shortages

Ed Spec & DRS Confirmation Categories

COMMUNITIES & CREATIVES

How individuals, communities, creators and/or artists imagine, discuss, work towards or demand a sustainable world

- Visions of the future, climate conversations or phone ins.
- Community action, activism
- Artistic responses; songs, art, novels or other creative works engaging with the topic
- Protests etc

CONSUMPTION OF MATERIALS & RESOURCES

How we use material and resources more sustainably and reduce waste

- Stuff we buy, wear and have.
- Recycling, reusing or repairing.
- Plastics, reduced consumption, circular/re-use economy, preloved fashion etc.

ENERGY

How we power our lives, homes and industry more sustainably

- Renewables, the grid, energy in the home, home heating, energy efficiency, reducing the thermostat, insulation
- Solar shading (blinds etc) to cope with higher temperatures.
- Solar panels and wind generation (on houses and in the landscape).

FOOD & LAND

What we eat, how we use land more sustainably or restore nature

- Plant based diets, nature friendly farming, nature restoration, planting for nature, agriculture, rewilding, biodiversity.
- Ways to reduce food waste and composting.

GREEN ENDORSEMENT FROM INFLUENTIAL FIGURE

General endorsement or role modelling of 'green' behaviours or attitude by an influential figure

- Celebrity, actor presenter, sportsperson or other role model.

Ed Spec and DRS Confirmation Categories

MONEY & ECONOMICS

How we invest money, run businesses and economies more sustainably

- Jobs or work scenarios related to environmental sustainability.
- Jobs or work scenarios that will be affected by the transition to net zero – eg oil and gas workers, farmers, boiler fitters.
- Sustainable investments and pensions.
- Green growth & degrowth

OTHER

Any other topic not represented in the categories

- Climate justice, inequity

PERSONAL CONNECTION TO NATURE

How we enhance (or destroy) our personal connection with nature

- Experiencing nature through the senses; recognising the emotions nature brings; recognising nature's beauty; nature bringing meaning to our lives; caring and taking action for nature, etc

TRANSPORT

How we travel and move around more sustainably

- Active travel – cycling, walking; public transport, electric vehicles
- Innovation – low carbon aviation etc
- Consider whether unsustainable choices around travel are being glamourised



The Ed Spec should be used as a conversation starter to capture how you intend to authentically embed Climate Content in the programme whether implicitly or explicitly.



The DRS Confirmation is filled out on completion of the show so more detailed and accurate responses are required. These answers will enable Channel 4 to track and report progress towards the Climate Content Pledge.

Further Resources – Climate Content

Albert

[The Impact of Climate Content](#) – A report on the impact of different types of climate content on audiences

[Telling Climate Stories](#) – A practical pocket guide for including sustainability in any genre. (TIP SHEET)

[Editorial Tool](#) – Test your story or idea for climate content potential

Green Production Guide – Tip Sheets

[Sustainability on Screen](#) - Deeper dive into Character Choices and World Building & Settings

[Hollywood Climate Summit](#) – Climate Storytelling Prompts & Pitfalls

Characters Portrayal

[We need better ‘activist’ characters on Screen](#) – (VIDEO) about why we need to have better activist characters on screen and how we can do it.

Miscellaneous

[Climate Spring](#) - Early-stage development funding for scripted and unscripted content, editorial consulting and training.

[Climate Onscreen](#) - Where climate and great stories meet. Tools and resources from the Sustainable Entertainment Alliance.

[Climate Content Summit 2024](#) – Edinburgh TV Festival shines a light on how to put the planet into programming in all genres. (VIDEOS)

[Greener Homes Handbook](#) – Nesta, in collaboration with Picture Zero bringing stories of low-carbon living to the screen.

[Julie’s Bicycle Sustainable Screen Resource Hub](#) - Julie’s Bicycle collaborates with the BFI in the Beyond Production initiative focusing on climate content.

[Pan UK Broadcaster Climate Research Report](#) - An evidence review into what role broadcasters can play in inspiring audiences to make changes to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss. (Ipsos & Centre for Climate & Social Transformations [CAST])

[Project Drawdown](#) - World’s leading resource for Climate Solutions

[The Good Energy Playbook](#) – A playbook for screenwriting in the age of climate change (TIP SHEET)