

# Sesh Events

## Sustainability tops the bill

**Humber Street Sesh is the region’s biggest music festival and has been a cultural landmark for the past ten years. Held every summer around Hull Marina, the event features regional bands, family events, exhibitions and street food and provides a great day out for all the family. More than 100 acts are booked to appear at the 2024 event in August.**

Festival director Dave Mays and Sponsorship And Communications Officer Elise Witty are committed to making the award-winning festival one of the most sustainable street events in the UK.

Music is in Dave’s blood: “My dad bought a nightclub when I was 14 and wondered why I didn’t do very well in my exams,” he laughs. He now runs local venue Social on Humber Street and is the former owner of the Welly Club and Polar Bear. Around 12 years ago, Dave joined forces with Mark Page who founded the weekly gig night called the Sesh – the genesis of the annual festival.

Humber Street Sesh reached its peak in 2017, Hull’s year as UK City of Culture, when the festival experienced a huge boost and the national spotlight encouraged big name sponsors. Despite the inevitable impact of the pandemic, the festival still acts as a powerful economic driver for the city and wider region, as well as providing a focus for local talent.

Sesh Events has been a member of Oh Yes! Net Zero since the early days, and was encouraged to join by its principal partner, the University of Hull. Dave and Elise saw a huge opportunity to reduce the festival’s carbon emissions in its tenth year of operation.

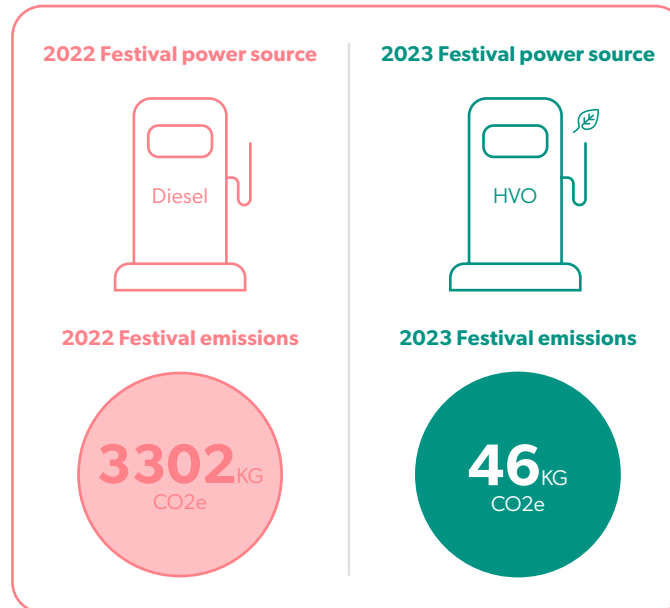
“Our carbon emissions were probably the festival’s most harmful environmental impact” says Elise. “We’d already transitioned to paper-free ticketing and reduced the use of disposable plastic, but we wanted to do more.”



## 90% reduction achieved and verified

Largely down to the use of diesel generators and tower lights, the festival’s 2022 emissions had totalled 3302.4kg CO<sub>2</sub>e. Ahead of the 2023 event, Elise connected with The Rix Group at an Oh Yes! Net Zero meeting and, together with the University of Hull, the team spoke to the group’s Chief Digital Officer, Harry Rix. He agreed to provide discounted hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) for the same price as diesel, resulting in a massive reduction in CO<sub>2</sub>e.

“As well as Rix, we worked with Paul Smallwood, owner of Elecplant, who supplied the generators used on site to power all the stages, the bars, the lighting... the whole festival,” says Dave. “Everything ran on vegetable oil, which we were informed by Rix would reduce our carbon emissions from over 3000kg of CO<sub>2</sub>e in 2022 to just under 46 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e.”



**Dave Mays**  
Festival Director



Oh Yes! Net Zero Member #116



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Dave and Elise didn't just take Rix's word for it but asked University of Hull scientists to verify the figures. They confirmed that the emissions generated by the 2023 festival were reduced by 90% compared to 2022.

"Sustainability has always been significant to us," adds Elise. "For many years we have operated a solar-powered Youth Stage which is supported by Wilberforce College – and for the past two years, with the support of the University of Hull, we have provided bamboo wristbands."

Encouraging performers and stallholders to adopt green practices was another feature for 2023. All the bars and street food vendors used biodegradable cups, wooden and biodegradable cutlery, and sponsors were not allowed to hand out leaflets.

Getting 15,000 fans to and from the festival in the most environmentally friendly way is another big challenge.

In 2023 Hull Trains – fellow Oh Yes! Net Zero members who sponsor the Dead Bod stage – offered free travel for festival ticket holders between Doncaster and Hull, encouraging people to ditch their cars. For 2024, the team is hoping to implement a green travel policy across buses and trains and is working with the train and bus operating companies and with Hull City Council to make this happen.

The council's input is vital. "We're formulating a plan which could be used as a test case by the council and rolled out for other big events, greening up travel to events in the city," says Elise.

Making the festival – already a highlight in the city's creative calendar – more sustainable could support Hull's fledgling ambition to become a UNESCO City of Music, following in the footsteps of Glasgow, Liverpool, Belfast and almost 300 cities around the world. The scheme recognises cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.

**"As a lay person you have no idea of what you can do and the help you can get to make your business greener. But you get to an Oh Yes! Net Zero event and you realise there actually is the potential to make a difference. We've had the opportunity to network and meet people who can help us and teach us, and made the key connection that ended up reducing our carbon footprint by 90%."**

**Elise Witty**  
Sponsorship and Communications Officer  
Sesh Events



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