

## Transcript

Marc Gallagher (Crew & Facilities Coordinator): Hi Ashley, thank you for joining us today to discuss the sustainability department. It is great to have a chance to talk to you, especially since Sustainability Coordinators play a vital and rapidly growing role in supporting to reduce a productions carbon emissions. We are aware that many key organisations that we work with, like BAFTA albert, BFI, Screen Alliance North, and Screenskills are all looking at further training, as well as formalising the role within the industry to support career pathways. But as someone who already has experience within the department, voices like yours are incredibly important, and as such I think it is a great idea if we can start with a little bit about your background, who you are, your role, and what was your entry into the industry?

Ashley Booth (Sustainability Coordinator): Hi, my name is Ashley Booth, I'm a Sustainability Coordinator. I studied film at university and then started off working in Film and TV doing roles all over the place, to be honest with you. I did a little bit of locations, I did some independent features, I did bit parts of researching and then I came away from that to be a university lecturer, which I did for around seven years. Then I decided to leave that again to go back into Film and TV, at that point I dipped back into locations and did some researching before coming over to sustainability.

Marc Gallagher: Brilliant, could you give me an overview of the role, the day to day work, etc.

Ashley Booth: Yeah, so the role is to oversee the sustainability efforts of the production at all levels. We look at things such as travel and transport, accommodation, catering, and waste management. All of these have got huge decisions to be made when it comes to the sustainability efforts. That may be things like phasing out fossil fuels, it might be things like looking at cutting out red meat, there's a million different things that you could look at. Depending on the production, we might also do some editorial consultation, including planet placement into the script. For example, that might be more obvious things such as dialogue, or it might be more minimalistic things like putting things in the background of a shot to normalise them more, like heat pumps in homes and that sort of thing. I like to see the role as helping the team make sustainable choices that they want to make, but don't always have the time or mental capacity to. A really nice example of that an NBCU production I was able to help the make-up department get flannel sterilisers, for taking off makeup, which meant that they didn't have to use single use makeup wipes. That was a really big win for them as well because they were frustrated about the makeup wipes but just didn't have the time or capacity to give that thought in terms of solutions. We also donate things to local communities wrap, such as costume and props, it's great to be able to contribute to a circular economy in this way.

Marc Gallagher: Yeah definitely, I bet that the local communities are always really appreciative of the equipment being able to be reused in that way.

Ashley Booth: Yeah and we have heard some beautiful stories about how things that we have donated have been reused, especially when it comes to charities and different community organisations. It is really, really heartwarming and nice for the crew to see it as well, and actually see the direct impact that these things are having, rather than just going to a landfill.

Marc Gallagher: Definitely, what advice would you give new entrants looking to enter the industry, but also the department?

Ashley Booth: I think kindness and understanding really, really take you a long, long way. We can talk a lot about things like eco anxiety, and how that can send people into fight or flight mode. With this role it is really important to understand different positionalities affecting peoples engagement with climate claps, so the person on production who you are seeing as completely disengaged, not interested, it may not necessarily be that way. It might be that they are so bombarded with the fact that the planet is on its knees that they have just frozen and they don't know what they can possibly do about it. So not always judging peoples reactions as a reflection of how people truly feel, and also helping people find their own motivations. The motivations may not always be necessarily planet based, they might be more of a social sustainability thing that happens to have a positive planet impact. A really nice example of that is unit drivers who typically can be sent back

and forth, back and forth between unit base and location for the most minor thing you know, a tie that's been forgotten for a cast member, and now they're like "well now I am driving an eight seater car to deliver this tie" that can be a real frustration, it adds work onto their day. Whereas actually we might come up with a solution that's just as simple as, okay the cars are going to go at set times, get as much going on in the cars before they go, so it is not necessarily wasted journeys. Now the driver may not be thinking about that in terms of petrol, they probably are as well to be honest with you, but they're just thinking about it as making their day a little bit easier.

**Marc Gallagher:** Yeah definitely and if it can reduce emissions as well like, in the process then that is perfect. Would anyone be able to work in the role, or is the department more designed for people with a background in the sciences?

**Ashley Booth:** I can see how a background in the sciences could be beneficial, but it is not needed. I don't have one and I know lots of incredible Sustainability Coordinators and Consultants who don't have one either. I'd say the main thing would be problem solving skills. It's a really big thing to look at these structures that have been in place for as long as they have in filmmaking, and try to think of ways to do them differently. I think that comes from an understanding of how a production runs in general. So I think getting experience on a film set, on a location will then help you develop those problem solving skills to go, here's how we could do things differently.

**Marc Gallagher:** Brilliant, so whenever somebody is entering the department, I was just wondering, is there any training courses you believe that somebody should go through if looking to secure a role in the department?

**Ashley Booth:** I actually think now is the ideal time to get in because there are so many training courses popping up at the moment. I did my training with Media Cymru and it was run by Tilly and Ellie Ashton, and I wouldn't be in the position I am now without that. You need a course that will help you understand what is required of you for each different department. I would also say that it is really important to learn how to effectively do carbon calculation and foot printing, although albert will help you for a lot of this, it is really good to deepen your understanding. I personally did a separate IEMA short course on carbon foot printing and reporting for this. Also Screenskills have got a brilliant online emodule that you can do at home for free. I think it takes about half an hour, twenty minutes, maybe forty at most and it just gives you an overview into sustainability. That's something that as Sustainability Coordinators we recommend as many members of crew to do as possible, but it is definitely a good starting point if you are wanting to come into the sustainability department specifically.

**Marc Gallagher:** More widely speaking what do you feel is imperative for everyone in production to be aware of to help you achieve your aims to a higher standard?

**Ashley Booth:** I think on a pragmatic level, an understanding that this is the way the industry is going, and seeing these changes as a chance to learn more and upskill in order to future proof your role is going to be really really beneficial. This is an industry that is always changing and you don't want to be left behind when it comes to these changes, you want to make yourself as employable as possible, and understanding the changes that sustainability brings is going to be really, really beneficial. I'd also say that understanding of the power of individual productions to create change. Quite often with shoots being eight weeks or however many weeks, it could be quite easy to think, "we will do it on the next one", but these shoots that are happening right now, lots of them are being used as case studies for how to do things in the future, and that does mean as well that we are still experimenting. So we are looking at what works, what doesn't, especially when it comes to things like power planning in remote locations. This roles being so comparatively new means we are still looking at solutions as well, so an understanding of that is really, really going to be imperative for everyone on production.

**Marc Gallagher:** So at what point of production is a Sustainability Coordinator brought in to work on the production and do you feel there are any changes needed in the scheduling process that would help benefit the department as a whole?

Ashley Booth: I think it can really vary at the moment so ideally we need to be brought on at the beginning of the prep stage, in order to help with certain big ticket decisions that are going to have a big effect on sustainability. That is things like transport, catering, deciding who is doing your catering, is it a company that is going to be on board with the things we are going to be doing, that sort of thing. I know at the moment there are cases that Sustainability Coordinators are brought on at the shoot stage, which can be really challenging because at that point you are just firefighting, rather than actively making sure those decisions aren't made. I think in terms of changes needed in the schedule, time in general is a huge, huge challenge for everyone on production separately to sustainability anyway, and with sustainability being a relatively new consideration, it can be really hard for crew to make space and even mental space for it. I don't have a solution for that straight away because we are an industry that loves a quick turnaround, but I'm hoping that maybe in the future that is something that is given a little bit more grace so that we can promote sustainability in every single way, including social sustainability and maybe preventing burnout of crew.

Marc Gallagher: Yeah fingers crossed that as productions start to see more and more of the benefits of sustainability, they will see the benefit of bringing people in at an earlier stage in production. Thank you for your time today Ashley, it is greatly appreciated, I was just wondering if there is anything else that you would like to add?

Ashley Booth: Just that I am really incredibly proud to be doing this roll and if it is something that you are interested in, it is the perfect time, as I said before, the industry is absolutely moving in this direction. You don't have to be a sustainability crew member to care about these issues, and everyone in a crew has the power to make change. That can be bringing reusables to work, ordering a plant based meal at lunch, or pushing for things in your department that would typically be binned to be recycled or donated, saving things from landfill. Everyone has the power to be the change today.