

# Letters To The Earth - a nationwide response to the climate emergency backed by Royal Court, Shakespeare's Globe & National Theatre Wales

- *The British public is invited to write Letters to the Earth as a response to the climate and ecological emergency we all face*
- *Backed by The Royal Court Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe and National Theatre Wales, the Letters will be given expression as part of a 'day of joint action' on Friday 12 April in theatres, arts venues and community spaces nationwide*
- *Members of the creative industries - including actors, directors and playwrights - are calling on the arts and culture community to do its part to tell the truth about the climate and ecological crisis and take necessary action.*
- *Supported by award-winning poet Kate Tempest, Bafta-winner Michaela Coel and playwright Simon Stephens.*
- *Inspired by Extinction Rebellion and the global School Strike For Climate, this is one of a range of cultural events in the run up to International Rebellion which begins Monday 15 April*
- *Send submissions to [letterstotheearth@gmail.com](mailto:letterstotheearth@gmail.com) by midnight Friday 29th March; subject line 'Letter'.*

Inspired by the work of Extinction Rebellion and the global School Strike For Climate, a new initiative, presented by The Royal Court Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, National Theatre Wales and a host of others, invites the British public - young and old - to write 'Letters to the Earth' as a response to the climate and ecological emergency the world is now facing. Deadline for submissions is midnight Friday 29 March - more information at <https://www.letterstotheearth.com>.

With support from writers Kate Tempest, Michaela Coel and Simon Stephens, the organisers say: *"This could be a letter to or from the Earth, future or past generations, those who hold positions of power and influence, other species. The idea is open to interpretation: it can come from a personal place, be dramatic in form, be a call to action. The invitation is open to all - to think beyond the human narrative and bear witness to the scale and horror of this crisis. This is an opportunity to ask how this existential threat affects the way we wish to live our lives and the action we take."*

## Letters To The Earth day of action Friday 12 April nationwide

The 'Letters To The Earth' will be presented as part of a 'day of joint action' on Friday 12 April across theatres, arts venues and community spaces nationwide. The Letters will also be made available rights free for anyone to download and present anywhere in the world from 15 – 28 April, coinciding with the Extinction Rebellion's International Rebellion, the School Strike For Climate, and Earth Day.

*"We need to find new stories, new ways to imagine our futures. We need to find hope in these dark times," said Jackie Morris, illustrator and author, who has contributed to Letters to the Earth. "It was an honour to be asked to contribute ... to be one tiny part of imagining a better future. I can offer only words, and a small swallow, made from ink, from hope. But I can also offer a fierce love for the wider, wilder world, and a desire to work towards building a better future for my children."*

Lucy Davies, Executive Producer at The Royal Court Theatre said: *“The Royal Court is proudly supporting and platforming Letters of the Earth. Arts organisations are civic buildings and we must make public space to amplify this emergency, and use our skills, vision and stories to help imagine an alternative future.”*

David Lan, writer, producer and former Artistic Director of The Young Vic Theatre, said: *“As Sophocles and Shakespeare and Moliere and Ibsen and Brecht wrote plays as interventions into the major political crises of their worlds and of their time, so we now need our writers to record and reflect this probably biggest ever global challenge but, more than that, to help us understand what to do about it, how to prevent climate disruption from destroying so much that the west, the east, the north, the south have struggled to create over millennia. The time has always been now.”*

### **Culture Declares Emergency**

Organised by members of the creative industries - including actors, directors and playwrights - the Letters To The Earth project is the beginning of a wider campaign which calls on culture to do its part to tell the truth about the climate and ecological crisis and take necessary action.

Theatres and arts venues across the country are invited to get involved in the coming response to the emergency, by hosting readings of Letters To The Earth on Friday 12 April, followed by an open conversation to bring people together in the face of this crisis.

*“Hundreds of thousands of school strikers and rebels around the world are demanding action. Local governments all over the world are declaring climate emergencies. It’s time for the arts and cultural sectors to do the same. What does an appropriate response from our sector look like?”* commented Kay Michael, theatre director and one of the organisers of the Letters To The Earth project.

*“Get in touch if you want be involved. We believe deeply that by providing spaces - such as through the Letters To The Earth project - for people to engage and face this crisis, that we can, together, become courageous and creative in our response. The stories we tell and the space we make for this emergency have the ability to shift the global narrative and generate the necessary political will.”*

*“Arts and culture practitioners and institutions, these times are calling on us all - to pause and reflect, not just on the emotional impact of what we are witnessing, but on what we can now do commensurate with this existential threat. As storytellers, writers, theatre-makers, producers, actors, directors, as creators of culture and thought leaders, let’s tell the truth about the climate and ecological collapse and act as though that truth is real.”*

If you are working in the arts and cultural industries and would like to get involved in the Letters to the Earth project and the wider campaign behind it - email [letterstotheearth@gmail.com](mailto:letterstotheearth@gmail.com).

### **Notes to editors**

[1] We are facing an unprecedented global emergency, the planet is in crisis and we are in the midst of a mass extinction event. Scientists believe we have entered a period of abrupt climate breakdown. Carbon emissions and temperatures keep rising; ecological collapse has begun. On this course we are likely to see abrupt and irreversible devastation. The time for denial is over – we know the truth about climate change.

In October 2018, the [International Panel on Climate Change reported](#) that we only have 12 years to change how we live, globally. That doesn't mean that we have to act in 12 years time - it means we have to act now to avert disaster, and already we are behind. The IPCC described the enormous harm that anything above a 1.5°C rise in global temperature would cause. It told us that limiting to 1.5°C may still be possible yet requires "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society."

Yet with temperatures now heading towards 3°C, the warnings of climate and ecological breakdown are already here:

In the past year, there are more signs that tipping points are being reached. In December it was reported that the rate of [Greenland's ice melt has quadrupled](#). Soon after, [NASA](#) discovered a huge cavern has opened up under Antarctica, and that a [polar vortex](#) destabilised sending freezing Arctic weather over the American midwest whilst January was the [warmest month in Australia](#), ever. In February the [BBC reported](#) how the Met Office have said that in the next five years' we could break 'safe' thresholds, risking global climate instability and runaway climate heating. Also in February, there were [reports](#) of a catastrophic decline in insect populations which will soon affect our food supplies. Increased disasters are now inevitable.

Douglas Wallace-Wells, author and journalist: 'The devastation of human life is in view': <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/02/the-devastation-of-human-life-is-in-view-what-a-burning-world-tells-us-about-climate-change-global-warming>

Rupert Read, environmental philosopher: 'This civilisation is finished: so what is to be done?': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzCxFPzdO0Y>

George Monbiot, journalist: 'My generation trashed the planet. So I salute the children striking back': <https://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/15/planet-children-protest-climate-change-speech>

Extinction Rebellion: <https://rebellion.earth/who-we-are/>

'Thank you climate strikers, your action matters and your power will be felt.' <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/15/climate-strikers-letter-thank-you>

Email: [culturedeclaresmedia@gmail.com](mailto:culturedeclaresmedia@gmail.com)

Phone: +44 (0) 7760280443 / +44(0)7986671716 / +44(0)7479234522 / +44(0)7986671716 /

Letters To The Earth website: <https://www.letterstotheearth.com>

Facebook event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/833783456983081/>

Twitter: #LettersToTheEarth #CultureDeclaresEmergency

Content drive:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kM9iUomref74GWrkeyTSpwQnu0GqFMGx>