

DESIGN FOR  
PLANET

Design  
Council



**CAULIBOX**

**“Sustainable design needs to be something that people can weave into their lives.”**

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Design for Planet is Design Council’s ambitious new approach to galvanise and support the UK’s 1.69 million-strong design community to address the climate crisis.

This strategic shift recognises the fundamental need to redesign our lives to save our planet, and champions the power and responsibility of designers to shape a better world.

Our Design for Planet case studies will showcase ten leaders in sustainable design from a diverse range of disciplines. They will explore the role of design as a powerful agent of change through sustainability and climate-action. We want these case studies to inspire and motivate the design community to prioritise the welfare of the planet in their own work and practises.

# CAULIBOX

Human centred design is the difference between an idea that looks good on paper and one that works in the real world. Something that the founders of the reusable lunchbox scheme, CauliBox, know all too well.

Thanks to their own experiences as city professionals, regularly relying on takeaway food bought on the hoof, they had first hand insight in to the problem of office bins piled high with takeout food packaging. When it came to creating a practical solution, they started small, prototyping with a pen and paper, to understand the needs and challenges faced by food sellers and their customers.

Their painstaking grass roots research and testing, combined with a commitment to keep learning and evolving as they go, has proved a successful formula.

“It is so tempting to start with a grand idea, but you can’t really come up with solution if you don’t know the problem,” says co-founder Josephine Liang.

“You’ve got to get your hands dirty,” she adds. “You cannot strategize into a more sustainable future in your bedroom. You have to go at the problem at the grass root.”

By simplifying the processes of sourcing, returning, washing and collecting the reusable lunchbox they have come up with a design that makes the sustainable choice the most convenient one. It’s a circular product, that demonstrates how reducing waste doesn’t have to mean difficult and expensive.

“Sustainable design needs to be something that people can weave into their lives,” says Josephine. “Reinforcing a sustainable habit until it becomes natural.”



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JOSEPHINE LIANG  
CO-FOUNDER, CAULIBOX

By focusing on reusing rather than recycling, CauliBox bypasses the UK's flawed recycling and waste management systems that often lead to most waste still going to landfill. Their motto: Takeaway without the Throwaway.

Each CauliBox, made from a durable and BPA free polypropylene, can be used more than 400 times before being fully recycled. Once used, customers drop off their CauliBox at a collection point (called CauliKiosk), or request a pick up (by bike, on foot or via electric vehicle.) The boxes are then washed in energy conserving bulk batches in commercial dishwashers.

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They carried out extensive research while developing the subscription-based service, in order to make it as easy and affordable as possible. This included testing with a diverse range of vendors from street markets to canteens and a day spent observing staff and customers in the hustle and bustle of a busy restaurant.

“We sat there for the whole day, observing different things and writing them down and then trying to understand how the different iterations of our technology could be built in a way that makes sense for a restaurant,” says Josephine. “A good idea can only get you so far if you don’t test it out on people and keep on improving it over time,” she adds.

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Continued testing, on the ground, was an integral part of making the design the best it could be. “You can do the exercise in your head, but I think for us the most important thing was truly going to those places and failing 100 times.”

Initially they used membership cards but adapted this after testing showed it was tricky for people to remember. They switched to a tech-based solution – introducing a simple, user-friendly app.

“People don’t remember to bring physical objects, but they will always remember to bring their phones,” says Josephine.

Customers use the app to scan a QR code at the food vendor to borrow or at the CauliKiosk to return - this keeps track of where a CauliBox is in the cycle of “distributed, used, returned, cleaned, distributed.” Members are incentivised with a points system where they are awarded CauliCoins for every CauliBox they return, which can then be redeemed for a range of sustainable products and services.

The digital capabilities of their scheme, developed with the help of Innovate UK, mean CauliBox are also able to keep a precise track of the positive impact their customers have on the environment when using CauliBox instead of single-use packaging. So far, their customers have prevented the equivalent of over 5,000 disposables from entering landfill.



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