



Sustainable Events Guide

Why event planners should consider sustainability and information on how to do it.

A free guide from Seventeen Events.



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Welcome to the Sustainable Events Guide.

Why should you read a guide like this? Maybe you're curious about what would make an event more sustainable. Perhaps you are an event organiser who is actively interested in making their events more sustainable. Or maybe you're looking for a place to start. Either way, we hope this guide can help.

Seventeen Events was founded with a focus on sustainable events. We've never offered sustainability as an optional extra or, even worse, tried to charge more for our sustainable approach. We don't believe in putting a price tag on our principles.

One of the building blocks of sustainability is transparency – a willingness to share best practice for the greater good. As part of our commitment to transparency and sharing best practice we offer this guide at no cost and we're here to help if you have other questions we can answer.

We've never claimed to have all of the answers. One of the fascinating things about working in the sustainable sector is that the landscape is constantly changing. A few years ago the answers would have seemed simple: carbon offsetting and biofuels. Now there is controversy around both

of those approaches, and new trends have emerged – local sourcing for instance. Staying up to date with emerging issues is one of the challenges of sustainability.

So far, the events industry has not embraced the sustainable agenda with open arms. BS8901, the British Standard for sustainable event management, was met with some negativity, and uptake has been slower than expected. Perhaps by the time we revise this guide that will have changed. Historically, however, there is no doubt that the events industry has been a poor ambassador for sustainability, sometimes even wearing its “one night only” bespoke approach as a badge of pride.

This is not intended to be a static document. We will be updating the contents of the guide online at www.seventeenevents.co.uk. We invite your feedback to allow us to improve the guide and shape it going forward.

Above all, the key thing is to make a start. As Edmund Burke put it, “Nobody makes a greater mistake than he who does nothing because he could only do a little.”

How to use this guide

This guide is intended to fulfil two purposes. The first is to inform. We have included relevant data where possible from credible sources, all of which are credited where appropriate. The information contained in this guide is as up to date as possible and revisions will be made on a regular basis.

The second purpose of the guide is to act as a practical handbook which will allow you to make decisions when meeting with new suppliers and venues. The last section of the guide includes checklists which you can copy and use again and again when meeting suppliers. The format of the checklists will also allow you to use our online eventberry system to manage the sustainability of your events. The basic system is free to use.

The knowledge part of the guide is split into five sections. 'Need to know' covers the core data around the big issues which affect the sustainability

of your event – energy, transport, waste and water. 'Walk the walk' explains how to manage your supply chain effectively to ensure that your suppliers are delivering sustainable value for you. 'Talk the talk' investigates the importance of communicating your sustainability, both internally and externally. 'Include and inspire' touches on the social and community issues which are a fundamental element of sustainability. Finally, 'Systems and standards' explains the basics of a sustainable event management system, and how BS8901 works.

Throughout the guide you can follow our friend Leo who is keen to organise an event in the most sustainable way possible. Follow his progress to see some of the pitfalls and challenges he negotiates on his path towards greater sustainability.

Energy

Energy is a big issue across the board, affecting everyone from governments worrying about energy security to householders looking to cut their bills. It's widely agreed that the carbon fuelled energy system is unsustainable. The carbon released from burning coal, oil and gas for power has pushed the planet into a dangerous and unstable position due to climate change.

The Committee on Climate Change recently advised the government that the UK needs an 80% reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 in order to help avert global warming. Failure to do so, they say, "would result in adverse environmental impacts with significant human consequences." (Building a low-carbon economy – the UK's contribution to tackling climate change - Report Dec 2008). So what does this mean for the events industry?

Events

No-one has yet come up with an agreed figure for the energy use of the events industry as a whole, but some individual events have measured and reported this. Energy used in powering venues and facilities is a significant proportion of an event's footprint. Other energy use is embodied in the transport fuel and in the production and transport of goods purchased for the event.

Measuring energy use is a useful exercise in making comparisons and planning strategic ways to reduce an event's carbon footprint. Measurements can be taken using specialist tools, by taking meter readings, by working out power use from the wattage and usage of equipment, or by measuring the amount of fuel used. Energy use is generally measured in kilowatt hours (kWh), and can be converted into tonnes of CO2 using conversion

factors which vary for different energy sources and fuels. At the moment, mains electricity equates to 0.537kg of CO2 per kWh. For more conversion factors see: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/reporting/conversion-factors.htm>

Supply

The solution to the global energy crisis comes in two main parts. Firstly, we need to change the sources of supply to more sustainable low carbon energy generation, and secondly we need collectively to do all that we can to reduce, or slow the growth in, demand for energy through increased efficiency.

The events industry can play a role in the supply as well as the demand part of the solution.

A switch to a green energy tariff, or better still a dedicated renewable energy supplier, will support the growth of renewable energy.

Some venues are taking matters into their own hands and installing micro-generation technology such as solar panels and hydrogen fuel cells. The ACC in Liverpool for example has five low noise wind turbines on the riverfront, providing approximately 10% of the venue's power as well as a clear visual signal to visitors of their commitment to the environment.

Where energy is generated specifically for an event, as is the case at most outdoor events, there are a number of suppliers who can provide

Energy supply for the bulk of events comes via the electricity and heating systems in place at venues, so we need to ask more of them.

Energy [continued]

alternatives to petrol generators. You could power your event using anything from sunshine to used chip fat or even harness power from your guests.

Solar technology is developing quickly in both large and small scale settings. Where once it would have been an unreliable and expensive option, there are now suppliers offering practical and viable portable solar generators. This silent, emission free form of energy generation is particularly well suited to outdoor events such as music festivals. Regular visitors to Glastonbury Festival's Green Fields, Croissant Neuf have a big top and a complete outdoor PA entirely powered by their 'Solar system'. Firefly provide smart and efficient solar generators with battery storage so that they can provide renewable power even after nightfall. They have powered everything from festivals to exhibitions to film premieres.

Biofuels, whilst not a carbon-neutral source of power, offer some savings in carbon emissions and are suitable for use in generators. It is important to check that the source of the biofuels used is sustainable, and communicate with suppliers to get an accurate estimate of the power that will be used. The most sustainable form of fuel is waste cooking oil sourced from local restaurants and caterers, which would otherwise have been sent to landfill. This is what fuels the generators supplied by Midas, and they will measure your fuel use and resulting savings in carbon emissions.

Whether using biofuel or petrol in a generator, there are measures that can be taken to minimise fuel use and CO2 emissions, principally about accurately matching power needs and generator size. A generator that is idling produces emissions, much like a car – often a large generator may be used all day for an event but only run at full capacity for part of that. Using smaller generators in parallel means that some can be switched off during

times with less power requirement, and using only the fuel required. Sparks Power for example supply small load sharing generators that switch on and off automatically, helpful in reducing capacity during periods of low usage.

Demand

The power used by the venue and event equipment is a significant proportion of the environmental impact of an event. There are lots of ways venues can become more energy efficient - investing in good insulation and low energy lighting can significantly reduce energy use, and save money too. No-cost housekeeping measures such as adjusting thermostats and timers, and making sure lights and equipment are switched off when rooms are not occupied also add up to savings. It can make guests more comfortable too. Opening the curtains to let in some sunlight and fresh air will keep guests attentive and cut down on unneeded lighting and air conditioning. For more detail on ways venues can save energy see the checklist on page 39.

A good example of an energy efficient venue is Sheepdrove Eco Conference Centre in Lambourn, Berkshire. Heating for the venue requires only two small boilers, due to high levels of insulation and the use of efficient underfloor heating. Waste heat from the kitchen extractor is recovered by a heat exchanger, and water is heated by a solar heating panel. The energy used is carefully monitored and sourced from 100% renewable sources.

Event equipment varies considerably in energy consumption. Choose LED lights instead of conventional par can lighting, and you will reduce energy use by up to 90%, as well as avoiding the overheating that lanterns produce. Being pedantic about switching off any equipment when not in use also pays off.

Energy tips

Easy Wins

- Ensure all lights are switched off in rooms that are not in use – consider motion sensor lighting to do this automatically.
- Specify modern, efficient AV technology such as LED lights.
- Hire your equipment from a busy supplier to ensure that the most use is being made of it, rather than having it sit collecting dust on a shelf somewhere.
- Check that your venue has some energy saving measures in place, from low energy lightbulbs to windows that can be opened instead of using air con.
- Hold your event in a room with natural daylight or outdoors and hold your event during the day to reduce artificial lighting requirements.

Useful contacts

Advice

Defra: www.defra.gov.uk

Suppliers

Ecotricity: www.ecotricity.co.uk

Good Energy: www.goodenergy.co.uk

Croissant Neuf: www.greenroadshow.co.uk

Firefly: www.fireflysolar.co.uk

Midas generators: www.midas-uk.co.uk

Sparks Power: www.sparkspower.co.uk

Sheepdrove conference centre:
conferences.sheepdrove.com

Tougher challenges

- Hire a biofuel or solar generator instead of a petrol one for your next outdoor event.
- Ensure your venue sources clean electricity from a supplier such as Good Energy or Ecotricity.
- Measure and communicate how many kilowatts of energy are used at your event.
- Hold a zero energy event in a venue that produces its own energy through microgeneration.

Follow Leo

Leo is organising a 2 day conference including overnight accommodation in the UK. The event will be attended by around 500 delegates from all over the country and speakers will comprise of around 20 European representatives. Leo is keen to make his conference as sustainable as possible - follow his progress over the coming pages.

Leo is aware that the energy use and the resulting CO2 emissions of the conference are a key area that he needs to reduce to make the event sustainable.

On site visits to the potential venues Leo investigates their energy supply and asks about energy efficiency measures. One venue say they do have a green policy, but are unable to tell him any more detail about their energy use. When he looks round the conference centre, he notices that all the lights and the heating are on already, even in rooms that are not in use that day. That rings alarm bells.

Instead, Leo opts for a venue that can demonstrate better energy usage policies, having saved 40% of their energy use since fitting low energy bulbs throughout the venue and motion sensor lights in the toilets and board-rooms. They will also allow him to measure the energy used over the conference period by checking and comparing meter readings.

Transport

Transport accounts for more than a quarter of the UK's carbon emissions, a figure which is rising. The 2007 Live Earth concerts successfully tracked their carbon emissions. You can read their full report at: http://liveearth.org/docs/Live_Earth_Carbon_Report.pdf. The table below shows the breakdown of emissions by type. You can see that guest transportation was the single biggest factor in their carbon footprint, and this is the case for almost every event rated.

Entity	Emissions (tons)	% of Total
Headquarters	548	2.8%
Sponsor Sales	85	0.4%
Production Team and Contractors	151	0.8%
Generators	221	1.1%
Facility & Concerts	864	4.4%
Activation Contractor (inc Venue Employees)	29	0.1%
Artist Transport & Merchandise Shipping	529	2.7%
Broadcasters	115	0.6%
Audience Travel	17,139	87.0%
Volunteer Travel	27	0.1%
Total (rounded)	19,708	100%

The key to reducing the impact of transport is knowledge of how different transport methods rank. The table below compares the average carbon emissions per passenger per kilometre. It is also important to factor in distances travelled and the number of passengers.

Transport type	Emissions per passenger
Short haul flight	130g/km
Long haul flight	105g/km
Ford Mondeo 1.8i (driver plus 1 passenger)	93g/km
Toyota Prius (driver plus 1 passenger)	52g/km
Bus	89 g/km
Train	60g/km
Coach	20g/km

A car will emit almost the same amount of carbon whether it contains a single commuter or a carful, and the extra legroom in business class means a bigger footprint than flying in economy.

Air travel

There have been fierce protests and debate around the proposed third runway at Heathrow airport. As an island nation, air travel is one of the fastest growing contributors to harmful air pollution in the UK, accounting for about 13% of our impact. Airline emissions are particularly problematic due to the height at which they are released, and the mixture of gases, which means they are 2.7 times more damaging than CO₂ alone. What's really worrying is the continued rate of growth in the sector. The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research predicts that the UK's aviation emissions alone could exceed the government's target for the country's entire output of greenhouse gases in 2050 by 134%. As soon as you fly in one speaker long haul for a conference, the carbon footprint of the event will shoot up.

Transport [continued]

There are some early developments taking place in more efficient planes and fuel types, but nowhere near enough to balance the growth in the industry.

Distances within Europe make rail a realistic alternative, and a comfortable, scenic one at that. The Man in Seat 61 is an excellent resource for planning overland travel.

One of the biggest reductions an individual or company can make is to reduce or eliminate flights.

Road transport

Road transport now accounts for 22% of UK CO2 emissions, and road traffic is increasing by 2% each year. As well as climate changing greenhouse gases, road vehicles create air pollution from nitrous oxide, hydrocarbons and particulates which are harmful to health. There's no perfect solution to this, but there are a number of ways to reduce emissions.

There are 31 million cars on the road in the UK, almost one for every two people, and they account for more than half of the UK's transport emissions. This is an area where serious reductions would be possible through the combined actions of individuals. Lift sharing, car pooling and car rental schemes such as Zip Car and Street Car can all reduce the amount of cars on the road. There are a number of websites to help organise lift sharing, including Liftshare with which you can set up a page for a specific event. Additionally, people should be encouraged to use alternative forms of transport.

Electric cars such as the G-Wiz are powered by electric batteries rather

than combustion engines, and do not cause emissions as they drive. However, there are limitations in terms of range, top speed, access to charging points and the relatively high cost of the vehicles. Hybrid electric cars, such as the Toyota Prius, use a combination of a battery and a combustion engine to cut use of fossil fuels, with the engine kicking in only when extra power is needed for acceleration or higher speeds. A number of taxi fleets use Prius cars, such as Green Tomato Cars. For comprehensive ratings comparing cars, see www.vcacarfueldata.org.uk and look out for fuel efficiency ratings like those on fridges which are now required on new cars.

The **vans and lorries** on our roads are hugely problematic in terms of emissions. European emissions standards are set for new vehicles, and vehicles with the highest levels are the most sustainable available on the roads, but we need to look at more than this. Reducing the distances goods are transported by choosing local suppliers is the best way to achieve this.

Many of the vans and lorries on our roads are empty.

More freight could be handled by train as a typical freight train can remove 50 lorries from our roads, and produces at least 80% less CO2. Shiplly.com offers an online auction space for getting your goods from A to B at the lowest cost.

Electric vehicles are a good choice for many transport fleets, particularly those serving urban areas around a depot. Smith Electric Vehicles manufacture a range of small lorries, vans and minibuses, which if powered on a green electricity supply are a very sustainable option.

By planning journeys more carefully, consolidating deliveries and backhauling, journeys can be cut, saving time, money and fuel.

Transport [continued]

Biofuels can offer carbon reductions from fossil fuels and with the right fuels can offer a sustainable transport solution. McDonald's, for example, have changed their delivery fleet to use 100% biodiesel made from its own used cooking oil. Other fuel types to which engines can be converted are compressed natural gas (CNG) and liquid petroleum gas (LPG). These both offer some savings on fuel efficiency and emissions compared with petrol and diesel, but ultimately are still fossil fuels.

Whatever the vehicle, journey planning and fuel efficient driving measures such as avoiding sharp braking and accelerating and ensuring tyres are correctly inflated can save fuel and emissions. Freight Best Practice offer very comprehensive guidance which can be issued to all drivers, and many bodies, including SAFED, offer training.

For event organisers, much of this will come down to supply chain management. Look for local suppliers using more sustainable transport options, and ask them to commit to fuel efficient driving techniques for their fleet.

Public transport offers much lower emissions per passenger kilometre than other forms of transport. Whilst most events cannot control the transport choices of the guests, there are many ways to encourage a greater proportion to use public transport. The choice of location for the event should

take account of where most guests will come from, and aim to minimise distances. For an international event, choose a location with a main airport that has direct flights to many places, minimising multi-stop trips. Bear in mind proximity to public transport, pedestrian access and bicycle access and storage. Recommend accommodation options close to the venue.

Other suggestions are to facilitate lift-shares via the event website, run shuttle coaches to the train station, hire out bicycles, or incentivise travel choice by offering a free drink or reduced ticket price to those travelling by public transport or car sharing. Venues and event organisers should communicate full and helpful information to guests on public transport travel options.

A useful site for comparing options within the UK is Transport Direct, which will find the transport methods available for a journey, and also compare typical CO2 emissions for each option.

Podcasts, webinars, webchats, social networking and even virtual events can replace live events in some circumstances and increase the potential audience. However, nothing beats face to face interaction, so it's important to have a clear policy on reducing impact as well as investigating other alternatives.

Transport tips

Easy Wins

- List public transport options on delegate booking confirmations
- Offer an eco cab service at the end of the event
- Find out delegates transport methods at the event and aim to increase the number travelling by public transport at future events
- Provide cycle racks and communicate cycling path routes to delegates
- Offset the transport emissions associated with your event
- Hold your event in a room with natural daylight or outdoors and hold your event during the day to reduce artificial lighting requirements.

Follow Leo

Leo is considering the location of his event and wants to encourage delegates to come by public transport and avoid flying. He thinks that a city in the centre of the UK would create less transport emissions from delegate travel, but worries that his speakers would need to fly. London would be a better solution for speakers to arrive by train, but how does the impact on the emissions created by delegates travelling further distances?

Using Google Maps to calculate average mileage and the DfT's site, transportdirect.org, to calculate associated CO2 emissions, Leo notes that the difference is marginal. Even though delegates would need to travel further, the few extra flights required for speakers really increase the emissions.

Leo decided that London is the best location. The majority of delegates can arrive by train or coach and Leo offers everyone arriving by public transport a booking discount of 10%. By encouraging speakers based in Europe to travel by Eurostar and train, Leo will save at least 150Kg of CO2 emissions per speaker. Leo also decides to offset the unavoidable CO2 emissions created by transport for the event at a cost of £200 with [climatecare.org](https://www.climatecare.org).

Tougher challenges

- Ask key suppliers to commit to fuel efficient driving techniques for their fleet
- Arrange car sharing for event attendees, speakers, entertainers and staff
- Offer a discount to people travelling by public transport
- Remove transport implications completely by organising a virtual event

Useful contacts

Advice

www.transportdirect.info
www.seat61.com
www.vcacarfueldata.org.uk
www.freightbestpractice.org.uk/saving-fuel
www.safed.org.uk

Suppliers

www.zipcar.com
www.streetcar.co.uk
www.liftshare.com
www.greentomatocars.com
www.shiply.com
www.smithelectricvehicles.com

Waste and Recycling

Waste is a big problem. In 2004, the UK produced a massive 335 million tonnes of waste (DEFRA), one quarter of which comes from homes and businesses. We're also lagging behind some of our European neighbours with recycling rates that are well below average. The good news is that this is starting to change, with councils, businesses and individuals starting to do more, but with only between 5 and 9 years of estimated capacity in the UK's landfill sites, there is a serious need to reduce, reuse and recycle that waste.

Reduce - reuse - recycle

These three Rs are well known, and are listed in the order we should aim for with waste. There's more to navigate than that though. Here's our expanded list, also listed in an order of preference which gives a rough guide to how sustainable they are.

Reduce - The absolute best place to start is in finding a way to reduce resources used and waste generated. There are many ways to do this at an event, and it is a real example of how acting sustainably and thinking strategically can save money. Start by considering what resources are actually needed and work to predict accurate quantities. Look for smarter designs and materials, and seek to reduce packaging.

Reuse, repurpose or reclaim - Better even than recycling, is reusing things, whether for their original purpose or for something different. No extra energy is required to transform materials as with recycling, and things which would otherwise have been thrown away get a new life. This can range from small actions such as using scrap paper to print informal documents or

finding a new home for old furniture, through to large scale projects like incorporating salvaged materials into building projects. At events, some creative thinking about reuse can create a real talking point - Thomas Matthews designed memorable event invitations for the Design Council through overprinting on outdated publications, and furniture used at the Observer Ethical Awards was made from old oil drums, Ecover bottles and shopping trolleys.

Recycling is absolutely key to achieving sustainability. It's not feasible to eliminate all use of materials, so resource use and waste will continue to be issues. By using recycled materials we reduce our reliance on virgin materials such as forests for paper and petroleum for plastic, and by recycling them at the end of their life, we reduce waste. Glass, paper, metal, and the most common plastics are now widely recycled, and there is no excuse for not doing so. Aim for closed loop recycling, in which items purchased are made from recycled materials, and these are then recycled again after use, and you are reducing both resource use and waste.

Remember that 'recyclable' as a label means nothing unless you ensure that it will actually be feasible to do so after use. For instance, almost all plastics are recyclable, but only a fraction are commonly collected by councils, so it might take some effort, cost and additional transport to do so.

Waste materials from events also can be really valuable to community groups - try Freecycle to find a new home for anything from leftover delegate bags to felt stage coverings.

Waste and Recycling [continued]

Disposal. Compostable waste is similar to biodegradable waste in the way it breaks down, but is a greener option. To be called compostable, waste has to break down much more quickly than that labelled biodegradable has to, and must not leave behind any toxins. This type of waste includes food and certain specially developed plastics based on plant materials such as corn starch which can be disposed of properly in a compost heap. No waste is really 'good', but composting is certainly the most sustainable option. Some venues have their own composting facilities - the Excel centre is home to the UK's biggest wormery for example. A few councils offer green waste collections for composting. There is a lot of room for improvements in the business and commercial sector as yet though.

Biodegradable waste including food and certain packaging is organic waste and is broken down by a natural process involving enzymes. On the surface this is not problematic, reducing to near nothing over time and potentially producing useful compost, but when buried in a landfill site it's a different story. This is because when matter biodegrades in the absence of oxygen it gives off biogas emissions containing methane, a gas with around 20 times more global warming potential than carbon dioxide. Technology has been developed to harvest this for power generation, but its use so far is limited and it still releases greenhouse gases. Also, some biodegradable items will leave toxins and pollutants behind as they break down. So, 'biodegradable' as a label is better than nothing, but its sustainability really depends on how it is disposed of, and this can be difficult to control.

Down here at the bottom of the scale are nasty materials that cannot easily be recycled, such as certain plastics and fused materials such as laminated paper. There are some specialised recycling centres which can take materials such as PVC, but often limited collection services mean the proportion of these products actually recycled is still very low. Lower down the scale than that are materials which can be hazardous when disposed of, such as heavy metals in electronic equipment.

For events organisers waste is a massive issue and should be tackled at every level. Consider your day to day office life and where possible do not print anything. Do emails need to be printed? If printing is necessary, set your printer to auto print double sided. Have a scrap paper pile ready for printing informal documents, reuse packaging and boxes, hold onto give-away bags and products they will likely come in handy at some point! There is no excuse not to recycle nearly everything that you use in your office, e.g. paper, plastic, cans, ink cartridges, set up a wormery and you can even compost your food leftovers. If you can send information to your delegates digitally then do so. If it is suitable then don't send paper invitations, use email. Where this isn't possible use recycled paper or other recycled products. Use products which come in reusable packaging e.g. glass bottles instead of plastic.

Waste and Recycling [continued]

Implement your own recycling scheme. WRAP have recycling scheme guides for small retailers, offices and hospitality. Look for reuse schemes for your office furniture, for example Green Works in London.

When planning your event, don't go overboard and order too much of everything, ask if there is an option to reduce packaging when materials are sent to you. Suppliers can often re-use event materials e.g. stage production and furniture is easily re-used, you can send back unopened drinks and food. Check that your suppliers and venue have an effective recycling scheme. Use suppliers who offer products which have been recycled and that are recyclable. Liaise with your caterers to check that they try to minimise waste and will compost food waste. See if there are any charity groups in your area who will take leftovers. Go to the Recycle Now website to find out where you could do this close to the venue. Using highly visible recycling bins at your event encourages and communicates with guests about recycling.

When looking into branding try to avoid including dates, this way you can re-use the same event material over and over again. Much of the merchandise received at events is never used. Pick products which you know your delegates will actually make use of.

Merchandise and banners are often made from PVC or other materials which are difficult to recycle materials so look into a biodegradable option such as cotton, cardboard or corn starch.

Consider what might be left behind, and whether there could be a use for it, for example, Festival Salvage recycle the tents left behind at festivals and sell them on to next year's campers.

Waste and Recycling tips

Easy Wins

- Ensure the venue and suppliers are able to recycle waste at the event. If not then use a specialist recycling collection company such Any-ware.
- Keep a measure (either per bag or weight) of the amount of waste not recycled – aim to reduce this.
- Closed-loop recycling; purchase recycled products that you know can also be recycled again and again.
- Ask suppliers to cut down on unnecessary excess packaging and ask if they offer biodegradable options.

Tougher challenges

- Ask to see the venue or suppliers recycling in action - look at the back of house bins to ensure they follow through on promises.
- Aim to replace paper with digital literature wherever possible.
- Re-use the same branding and merchandise at following events by future proofing it.

Follow Leo

Leo is running to a tight deadline, and realises he's forgotten to order a press board for his event which is essential for photo calls with speakers. He phones an eco banner supplier, but he's way too late for their turnaround times. He knows there is a supplier who produces conventional pop up banners in 24 hours – not great as they're made from PVC but he needs a solution. Leo changes the artwork so that it's as simple as possible and includes only key partner logos who are involved in the event every year. He then arranges storage for the banner and knows he will use it for future events.

Useful contacts

Advice

WRAP:
www.wrap.org.uk
Recycle Now:
www.recyclenow.com

Suppliers

Freecycle: www.freecycle.org
Greenworks: www.green-works.co.uk

Merchandise

Remarkable: www.remarkable.co.uk
EcoIncentives: www.ecoincentives.com

Branding

Greenhouse Graphics:
www.greenhousegraphics.co.uk
BioBanner: www.biobanner.co.uk

Land use

The way we use the land at events has a key impact on the sustainability of the events we run. It may feel like land is a renewable resource – after all it's not running out in the way that oil or gas is. However, the effect we have on land can have an intense, long lasting impact and careful consideration is needed to ensure we're not damaging something we may take for granted.

Despite the debate around Greenfield land and development, less than 15% of land in the UK is defined as urban. So what does "Greenfield" actually mean? Greenfield land is previously undeveloped land in a rural or urban environment. The natural opposite to this is Brownfield land - in the UK another common term for Brownfield sites is previously developed land or PDL.

Greenbelt land is envelopes of countryside next to urban areas which stop the sprawl of cities into the countryside. Currently 13% of land in England is greenbelt (Campaign to Protect Rural England).

For event organisers, considerations are likely to focus on the effect that guests, staff or infrastructure could have on the quality of the land. This might be as obvious as contamination of ground with chemicals or waste, or a more subtle effect from pedestrian traffic on lawns or vehicles delivering over fields or pathways.

Consider whether your event is likely to have a direct impact on land use – i.e. is it outdoors, indoors, on Greenfield land or urban land? If the event has a direct effect on the land, what can we do to ensure that the area is returned to the same state after the event? You can check the Campaign to Protect Rural England website to find out if the land is on greenbelt.

There are more and more suppliers in the events industry who understand the effect that events can have on land quality. Ensure that the suppliers you work with have an understanding of the area and any issues surrounding the land use. It may be an area with particular biodiversity, in which case transport, chemicals and even sound used at the event should be sensitive to this. Waste has been discussed already, but ensure there is sufficient litter picking at the event and that any likely waste materials are dealt with properly.

What could be done as part of the event to actually improve land use? For example, if team building is part of the event could the teams be set a task to improve an area of land? If land is required to stage the event, i.e. it is not taking place in a purpose built site, the aim should be to use previously developed land rather than Greenfield land. If Greenfield land is being used sustainable principles should be built into the planning of the event.

Land use tips

Easy Wins

- Take photographs before the event to compare the state of the location afterwards.
- Choose previously developed land over green field sites
- Incorporate an activity into the event which will actually improve land use.

Tougher challenges

- Consider composting toilets, e.g. www.comfycrappers.com

Useful contacts

Advice

CPRE: www.cpre.org.uk

Suppliers

Comfycrappers:

www.comfycrappers.com

Pea Green toilets:

www.peagreentoilets.co.uk

Water

On a global scale, we are going to be hearing a lot more about water as a major environmental issue. With risks of major water shortages affecting people and agriculture, and climate change related storms and flooding expected to increase, talk of water as 'the new carbon' is becoming reality.

Closer to home, it may seem like less of an issue, but reducing water waste and usage should be central to sustainability planning. The average person in England uses 150 litres of water per day, 50% more than 25 years ago, and this has led to severe shortages in South East England in particular.

For event organisers there are many steps that can be taken to reduce water use, without impacting on the comfort of guests. Simple and cheap steps can considerably reduce water usage. Retrofitting flow controllers to existing taps can reduce water use from the tap by up to 80%. Another easy idea is to put a 'Hippo' (or even a plastic bottle full of water), into the toilet cistern which can save around a third of the water used per flush. Ask your venue what measures they already have in place, and what more they might consider.

Look out for dual flush or reduced flush toilets, water-less urinals, taps activated by sensor, and foot operated taps in kitchens; all are great features to look out for when assessing the sustainability of a venue.

Even bigger reductions can be made through choosing water saving technology. It makes commercial sense as well to look at reducing water usage, as doing so will mean savings on water bills.

Striving for the most sustainable option, it is worth considering harvesting rainwater and recycling waste water. There are a number of technologies available, and depending on the particular site, the savings gained can pay back the cost in a short time. For example, rain harvested for watering a golf course in Leicester cuts mains water usage by 20% and the expected payback for the system is five years.

Water usage at an event can be harder to measure than energy, but it is worth finding out if sub meters or flow meters are installed, as readings can be taken. If you are bringing in your own water supply, such as for an outdoor event, check with your supplier if the amount used can be recorded and compared with other events.

Water [continued]

Drinking water

For whatever reason, drinking bottled water has become increasingly the norm over recent years. This may seem harmless but there is an ethical issue here. According to Thirsty Planet, 20 litres of water is just two flushes of the toilet for most Westerners, but that same amount would serve a villager in rural Africa for an entire day. That's before you've dealt with all the waste plastic and transport issues which come with bottled water. And let's not kid ourselves that it tastes different – blind tastings have shown that tap water is normally ranked very highly by consumers. For event organisers there is a clear imperative to stick to tap wherever possible. If you absolutely can't, there are ethical water brands such as Belu, One Water and Thirsty Planet which donate some or all of their profits to fresh water projects in developing countries.

Pollution

Linked to water is pollution created by cleaning. Chemicals used in standard cleaning products can be damaging to biodiversity when they reach the water supply, so ask your venue if they use an eco friendly alternative.

Follow Leo

Leo wants to serve jugs of tap water at the conference. It's not something that the venue normally do, and they only stock a small amount of jugs for juice. The venue is a temporary building so the water supply is all coming from one place and the venue suggest that the tap water is filtered before drinking. So in order to fulfil Leo's request they would need to purchase extra jugs and allocate one member of staff on filtering and refilling duty. The financial and resources involved don't weigh up against the sustainability benefits, so in this instance Leo opts for bottled water from an ethical provider. He makes a point of recommending a solution to providing tap water in his feedback contact with the venue.

Local sourcing and sustainable procurement

“Local” seems to have replaced “organic” and “Fairtrade” as the buzzword on everyone’s lips. Sourcing goods and services from your local area is good for your event, as you’ll be getting products and advice which are relevant to your project. You’ll also be reducing the effect that transport has on the sustainability of your event. Finally, you’ll be supporting local employment and business, encouraging a thriving base for events you run in the future.

The changes which have taken place in the UK over the past 50 years in the way we source food have been subtle yet unmistakable. In that period we have lost three quarters of our native orchards, as French and South African apples have represented better value. We’re in a position where 95% of all fruit and half of all vegetables bought in the UK are imported. Now, consumers and businesses alike are waking up to the fact that cost and value are not always the same thing.

So what is “local?” The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply defines local as “based within easy reach of the buyer.” This may seem unhelpfully vague, but a common sense approach is needed. If you were

looking for a supplier of fruit and veg, local could mean within a mile of your venue. If you were sourcing a complicated piece of LED lighting kit, local might mean within 50 miles of your event. For unique performers or technical structures, local might simply mean from the UK, or the EU. Defining what local means to you requires thought and transparency.

Don’t be afraid to ask your suppliers about where the end of the line is in your supply chain. A British made branded bag or banner may be produced here but then shipped abroad to be printed.

There may be an argument in some cases that sourcing locally is not the most sustainable option. One frequently quoted example of this is tomatoes, which are more environmentally friendly if imported from Spain than if grown under heated glass in the UK.

For event organisers, the key is to think about the supply chain for your event. Are there local suppliers you could be using instead of the usual suspects? Local suppliers may have better insights into how the local area will affect the operation of your event. You need

to think about more than where the Head Office is though – is your “local supplier” actually getting kit trucked in from their central warehouse? Follow the supply chain to find out the true impact of the location of your suppliers.

Local sourcing and sustainable procurement [continued]

Focus on the benefits of using local suppliers – this isn't just about “doing the right thing,” it will help your event become more successful. Some plus points to bear in mind include:

- Suppliers will be more relevant for your event, local knowledge will be beneficial
- Less travel required so costs and emissions likely to be lower – you have greater bargaining power if you're dealing with a local supplier whose delivery overheads will be lower.
- Your supplier will know the area and potentially the audience well
- You will get greater certainty – e.g. quotes will be based on local knowledge, not subject to venue visits and a guesstimate. Quicker delivery or turnaround times could also be a benefit.

By definition the suppliers who are local to you will depend on the location of your event. But there are suppliers out there setting best practice in the way they operate. Acorn House restaurant in London sources all of its produce from the UK or by boat – none of its food is air freighted. Within London they use biodiesel vehicles to transport produce. They also have a commitment to the local community, recruiting trainees from the local area and offering work placements to local school children.

Your local council could be a good place to start. Councils will often have buyer networking events where you can meet local suppliers. The Fairtrade Foundation will help you ensure that goods you have to source from overseas are sourced ethically.

You could consider initiating a labelling or tracking system for all purchases relating to your event. How many receive a 'local' label? How many receive a 'UK' label? Measure this and improve for future events. Serving a wholly locally sourced menu at your event is a low cost sustainable option, and will be a talking point for guests if communicated well on menus.

Transparency

Transparency may seem like an odd topic to include in a guide on sustainable events. After all, we're not dealing with money laundering or corrupt politicians, are we? However, transparency is a vital building block of sustainability. One of the key elements of a sustainable approach is a willingness to share information and best practice without expecting anything in return.

This may all sound a bit philosophical, but there are high profile business examples of the benefits of transparency. Google have famously made a fortune by offering a service which is free for anyone to use. Even Radiohead got in on the act by offering their "In Rainbows" album for whatever customers wished to pay – and ended up with their most profitable digital release.

Transparency not only prevents corruption at the most extreme ends of the market, but it also encourages a more ethical approach and better compliance to legal standards. One area which event organisers may wish to consider is commissions which they offer to or accept from other suppliers. These are not illegal in themselves, but organisers should be mindful of how transparently these payments are being communicated to their clients. Would the client see such a payment as an honest reward for hard work? Or would they feel that the transaction was taking place behind their back?

- How much information can you transparently communicate? Is there a line you need to draw between information which is sensitive to the business and information you can communicate more widely?
- Who does it need to be communicated to? Are your lines of communication clear and relevant, or is there a danger that you could be accused of trying obscure damaging information by burying it in other unnecessary data?
- How can you benchmark the communication of your information? What areas of transparency can be communicated easily to stakeholders?
- Where will it be published, e.g. online, in your annual report. Will it be visible for all of your staff and customers?
- What are the criteria that could be used to judge transparency? Could all of your financial information be published? Could all of your stakeholders be communicated to openly? Would you be happy for feedback from your event to be published?

Transparency [continued]

Transparency in action – The Hay Festival

The Hay Festival takes place every spring in Hay-on-Wye, nestled in the Brecon Beacons. Over the years the festival has spread to other locations across the globe including Granada in Spain, Bogota in Colombia and Segovia near Madrid. The festival has a long standing commitment to sustainability and this is now reflected in their Greenprint programme.

Greenprint aims to offer practical advice as well as an online toolkit for other event organisers to learn from the work that has been done at Hay. This could have been a difficult process – essentially the festival is revealing all the mistakes they have made in the past for public scrutiny. However, the spirit of collaboration in which the Greenprint initiative was presented has meant that Hay found a wealth of willing participants to feed into the process. This has in turn created an evolving online pool of resources which all organisers can draw upon. The information is updated over time to ensure that new developments are included.

Steps you could consider to make your event operations more transparent include:

- Commit to publishing a proportion of information about your company online every year.
- Commit to a “plain English” policy which should reduce the amount of jargon and buzzwords which could otherwise obscure your message.
- Add transparency to the list of criteria you use to judge potential suppliers – ensure that anyone you are contracting with is prepared to be as open and transparent as you are.

Financial impact

In the past it has been easy to see sustainability and financial success as being at opposite ends of the business world. In fact, the opposite applies – an event cannot be truly sustainable without making sense financially, as well as environmentally and socially. One of the most misleading stereotypes around sustainable events is that you will have to pay more, and in the end will receive an inferior product. This is, by definition, not a sustainable path.

In fact, running your events more sustainably should save you money. If you can manage your resources to reduce overall consumption, reuse materials wherever possible and recycle anything you no longer need, you should be able to make savings. This works on every level from the simplistic – printing double sided is better for the environment, but also halves your stationery bill; to the complex – The Stern Report of 2006 outlined the clear business case for sustainability.

It should never be necessary to pay a premium to run your event in a more sustainable way. There are certain high profile items – organic food being a good example – which currently do cost more than their traditional equivalents, but these are rarely in areas where there are no alternatives.

Running a sustainable event is all about managing your resources, and your budget is one of the most important resources you have. If your event is more expensive than previous similar projects, or fails to deliver on its objectives, then you risk sending the message that sustainability is a costly indulgence rather than a necessity for the future success of your organisation.

Consider how you can track the financial impact of the sustainable measures you're introducing – both positive and negative? Could a system like BS8901 help?

Quantify your financial aims. Is the event designed to make a profit? Break even? Or is it part of a wider marketing strategy which funds another element of your organisation?

There is no shortage of suppliers out there who want to exploit your finances. Finding which organisations can actually support your sustainable aims is more difficult. The Co-operative Bank operates an ethical policy which excludes any potential customers who may have skeletons in their closets. Triodos Bank goes one stage further by insisting that all customers demonstrate a positive commitment to sustainable issues.

Financial impact [continued]

Follow Leo

Leo wants to serve jugs of tap water at the conference. It's not something that the venue normally do, and they only stock a small amount of jugs for juice. The venue is a temporary building so the water supply is all coming from one place and the venue suggest that the tap water is filtered before drinking. So in order to fulfil Leo's request they would need to purchase extra jugs and allocate one member of staff on filtering and refilling duty. The financial and resources involved don't weigh up against the sustainability benefits, so in this instance Leo opts for bottled water from an ethical provider. He makes a point of recommending a solution to providing tap water in his feedback contact with the venue.

Number crunching

Stern Report of 2006 outlined the key economic drivers for a move towards sustainability. Key findings:

- The benefits of strong, early action considerably outweigh the costs.
- Unabated climate change could cost the world at least 5% of GDP each year; if more dramatic predictions come to pass, the cost could be more than 20% of GDP.
- The cost of reducing emissions could be limited to around 1% of global GDP; people could be charged more for carbon-intensive goods.
- Each tonne of CO₂ we emit causes damages worth at least \$85, but emissions can be cut at a cost of less than \$25 a tonne.
- Shifting the world onto a low-carbon path could eventually benefit the economy by \$2.5 trillion a year.
- By 2050, markets for low-carbon technologies could be worth at least \$500bn.
- What we do now can have only a limited effect on the climate over the next 40 or 50 years, but what we do in the next 10-20 years can have a profound effect on the climate in the second half of this century.

View the full report at

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/stern_review_final_report.htm

Ethical supply chain

Managing your supply chain is a crucial part of making your event more sustainable. In simple terms – it's not just what you're doing, it's what all your suppliers are doing too. This isn't about bullying your suppliers into being more sustainable or spending so much time looking over their shoulder you don't get anything else done. What it does mean is creating a partnership between your organisation and your suppliers so that sustainability is an issue which is understood and embraced by every level of your supply chain.

You can set standards for delivery from suppliers. These should be measurable and practical - it would be very difficult to demand from a supplier that they supply CVs and conditions of work for all staff, but it could be easier to ask them to sign a clause as part of their contract committing them to decent standards of employment.

Your ethical supply chain should form part of the broader service level agreement with your suppliers. This reinforces the message that sustainability should be delivered as standard not as an optional extra. At a more global level, you could refer to the Ethical Trading Initiative to help protect staff further down your supply chain.

The Ethical Trading Initiative base code is as follows:

- Employment is freely chosen.
- Freedom of association and right to collective bargaining are respected.
- Working conditions are safe and hygienic.
- Child labour shall not be used.
- Living wages are paid.
- Working hours are not excessive.
- No discrimination is practised.
- Regular employment is provided.
- No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed.

You're probably already aware of one of the most familiar ways to ensure the ethics of your supply chain – the Fairtrade symbol. Fairtrade goods are produced to recognised standards which seek to create greater equity in international trade. It doesn't just cover tea and coffee – you can now even get Fairtrade footballs. Think about the impact small steps like this could make at your event. Insisting on Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar for instance should add a negligible amount to your budget, but creates a powerful, visible way for guests or delegates to recognise your commitment to the issues.

The key to managing your supply chain for your event is to track and monitor who your suppliers are and what their policies represent. Ask yourself:

- How can we trace and track our supply chain to ensure that it is as ethical as possible?
- If we are confident that our supply chain is beyond reproach, how can we communicate this to other stakeholders and guests?
- What are the event elements which count – Food? Equipment? Staff? And how do we weight those points?

Once you've identified the issues, you can use your leverage with suppliers to help you benchmark your progress. Several suppliers already have a recognisable commitment to issues around the ethics of their supply chain.

Connection Crew is a London based social enterprise which offers crewing support for events at very competitive rates. All profits from the business are either invested in training and development, or used to fund the Connection at St Martin's daycentre for the homeless. This doesn't mean you get a second rate service though, as the testimonials on the website attest.

Stakeholder communication

“Stakeholder communication” may sound like the worst kind of marketing-speak, but defining who you’re working with and for at your event is a sensible, sustainable way of doing business. Collaboration is a key element of sustainability, and sharing best practice and lessons learned is part and parcel of running a sustainable event. Everyone involved in planning your project will feel encouraged if the steps you’re taking are explained to the broadest possible audience.

Traditionally, stakeholders would have been defined as investors, employees, staff and customers. In planning a sustainable event you will probably want to look at a much wider definition of who is a stakeholder in your event – from government bodies to local communities to the public at large.

Getting started

Think about how you can define the stakeholders for your event:

- Who could be affected by the event taking place?
- Who could learn from best practice you establish?
- Who might you need to consult in planning this event?
- Who needs to hear about the positive steps you are taking?

No-one is isolated. We all use products and services from, and provide them to, other people. And others can affect or be affected by us in other ways. And we have influence in all these directions.

Communicating your sustainable development isn’t just about covering all the bases with suppliers and customers. It also allows you to inform and even educate other organisations involved in the supply chain of the event, and could even act as positive PR for the event.

Follow Leo

Leo is adamant that everyone should be able to see the sustainable work that has gone into the event, so he adds a blog to the conference website where he records his progress, good and bad. This transparency has an unexpected side effect as readers leave comments recommending their own favourite suppliers and come to see Leo as “one of the good guys” rather than a faceless conference organiser. Leo realises that although operating transparently is initially nerve-wracking, it pays dividends in terms of the positive feedback he receives.

External communications

You're doing your best to be as sustainable as possible – you deserve to be able to make a song and dance out of it. Tell the world about the progress you've been making and help other organisations understand the progress you've been making. However there are pitfalls as well as plaudits to be won in the way you communicate your sustainability externally.

Greenwash is an issue which has dogged many organisations trying to win PR for their sustainable efforts. It can be a short step from being praised for your improvements to being criticised for overstating your case. How can you tread a careful path through this minefield?

Tips for sustainable communication

- Don't use words you don't understand. "Organic" doesn't mean "healthy" or "locally sourced" or "fairly traded," it has a specific legal definition – make sure you're being clear about what you're saying.
- Don't just think about what's in it for you – what have you learned that could be useful to other organisations? An open and transparent culture will pay dividends for your business.
- Stay grounded. We all have a lot to learn – saying that you're the best at this or world leaders at that may not encourage co-operation.

Best practice

www.agreenerfestival.com - Not for profit site, supported by Glastonbury Festival and Julies Bicycle among others, is working with festival organisers to promote and improve sustainability of music festivals, with many organisers sharing good practice.

www.mssociety.org.uk – The MS Society were the first charity to run their events in compliance with BS8901. PR activity around this has encouraged other charities, conference organisers, potential venues and suppliers to view sustainability as both desirable and achievable.

www.wewanttap.org – Belu, an ethical bottled water company supported this campaign for tap water.

Monitoring, measuring and feedback

In order to be able to benchmark your sustainable progress you have to be able to accurately measure what you're doing. This doesn't have to be an in-depth scientific exercise or a complicated footprint measurement. You need to decide what the relevant information is that you need to capture for your event so that you can make improvements to events you run in the future.

One expression you will probably have to become familiar with – like it or not! – is key performance indicators, or KPIs. Put simply, KPIs are the measurements you make to set standards for your performance on any particular project. So, for instance, for power usage, your KPI might be kilowatt hours (KWh). If you can measure how much power you use over the course of the event you can then set a target for performance in the future, aiming to bring this figure down. The aim isn't instant perfection, but consistent improvement.

There are three levels of KPI you should consider:

- Legal compliance; the minimum you need to achieve to comply with the law.
- Best current practice; following the lead of other organisers.
- Beyond best current practice; leading the way for other organisers.

Over time as your organisation gains knowledge and experience you can set more of your KPIs in these higher categories. The focus should be on outcomes you can actively measure. So for instance “How much power did the event use at the venue on the day?” could be a good KPI, while “Did everyone have a really good time?” wouldn't be as easy to measure.

It may be possible to use evaluation forms or pre-attendance questionnaires to judge the effect of the event against its aims. This would allow you to check whether participants have a better impression of certain aspects of the event, or have gained a greater understanding of some of the issues.

Think about the kind of information you're asking delegates to fill in on their feedback forms. If they're faced with a long, wordy form which asks lots of pointless questions you're far less likely to get honest feedback than a simple design which asks three top line questions. Interactive technology can be used very effectively throughout an event to gather feedback from guests. Suppliers such as Crystal Interactive could help you with this.

Follow Leo

Leo is also very keen to communicate the sustainability of the event to all of his stakeholders, but most importantly the delegates and his senior directors. He wants to be able to measure what difference he has made and have something to shout about. Leo sets up a blog to note all of his dilemmas and share his decisions with any interested parties. Looking at transport in particular, Leo is able to monitor how many delegates have use the liftshare website, and how many take up his discount offer for using public transport. A few simple calculations give him a carbon saving which can be communicated to guests. Leo also produces some signage for the event which explains the sustainable initiatives he has taken, and directs delegates to his blog to find out more.

Community impact

Sustainability is about more than the environment. It is about striking a balance between green issues, financial considerations and society at large. When we talk about communities we often imagine villages or towns, but in fact a community is defined by the Community Development Foundation as “a number of people greater than a family network who share major aspects of their life together over a considerable period.” So this could be work colleagues, neighbours on a street or your local church.

This brings benefits and responsibilities for event organisers. They should learn to draw on the resources available for them in the local community, but they also have a duty to respect their host communities, consult with them openly and protect them from any adverse effects of the event.

Considerations

- How can this event have a positive effect on the local community?
- What consultation needs to take place between the event organisers and the local community?
- Tying in to local suppliers – what suppliers could we use who would positively help the community affected by the event?
- Is there a system in place for gathering feedback from local communities after an event? Assuming it is a public event or an event which could affect the general public.
- What lasting legacy could the event leave?

For event organisers a commitment to sustainability offers a unique opportunity to work with communities. Best practice in the industry should be to move away from current thinking around “neutrality” – carbon neutral, impact neutral or similar – to a position where events actually have a positive effect on local communities. Events should be good neighbours to their host locations, and best practice would be to institute some kind of lasting legacy which will leave the community improved by the event.

Security and safety

Health and safety seems to go hand in hand with sustainability, perhaps because they have followed similar patterns in the development of their best practice. Thinking about the welfare of guests, staff and stakeholders at your event is an intrinsic part of a sustainable approach.

There are nearly as many myths and false reporting around health and safety as there are around sustainability, so let's be clear about Health and Safety Executive advice:

- If there is genuinely no significant risk, you do not need a written risk assessment.
- If a written assessment is needed – keep it fit for purpose, and crucially: act on it.

Follow Leo

Leo's venue has a leak in the roof, meaning that an area of the foyer must be screened off to the public. The venue don't have any suitable screens so plan to purchase some large panels to cover the area. Leo suggests some more sustainable solutions: moving existing banners to cover the area, creating drapes from reusable / existing material, re-considering the layout of the foyer so the registration desk backs on the screened off area and providing an usher to direct people away from the area.

Key actions:

- Identify the hazards
- Decide who might be harmed and how
- Evaluate the risks and decide on precaution
- Record your findings and implement them
- Review your assessment and update if necessary

At the event consider everything from clothing (do the people helping you to run the event have the right clothes for the conditions, such as rainwear, sun hats, aprons or a high visibility jackets?), to public safety. Are there places where people might slip or fall? If so, liaise with the venue managers to remove the risk or clearly mark these areas with a warning. Are fire exits clearly marked? Do you have a copy of the hired venue's health and safety policy and fire evacuation plan?

If there are health and safety issues, try not to spoil all your hard work in creating a sustainable event by choosing an unsustainable solution to the problem. Keep in mind all the sustainability lessons you've learnt and try to find a practical but low impact solution.

Cultural impact

If you believe everything you read in the papers, you might think we live in a multicultural, multiracial melting pot where all four corners of the globe meet. In fact, the population of Great Britain is still overwhelmingly classed as white British – over 85% at the last census. There are around 3.5% of the population who identify themselves as being from the Indian subcontinent and around 2% who see themselves as black Africans or Caribbean. The largest non British group in the UK is other white people, e.g. from Eastern Europe, Ireland, Australia or the USA.

What does this have to do with sustainability? It's all about balance, fairness and transparency. In order to be sustainable, your event has to offer a level playing field for those attending and treat all delegates or guests as equals as far as possible.

For event organisers, consider what can be done to encourage the broadest possible diversity of audience to the event? This applies whether guests are invited or the event is open to all. The demographics of your audience should be relatively easy to measure. Tying in with Community Impact section of the guide, what can be done to ensure that cultural opportunities are available to the community hosting the event as well as the guests?

Tips

- Check event dates to monitor whether they clash with religious holidays.
- Benchmark attendance to monitor demographic diversity.
- Provide a prayer room and quiet space for delegates who wish time to themselves.
- Introduce delegates or attendees to a culture they may not be aware of. Ensure this is relevant to the content of the event. For example if your event is a business conference focussing on innovation, are there spiritual principles which could be applied in a lateral way?

Equality & diversity

In working towards a diverse approach, consider:

- Ability: Nearly one in five people of working age (6.9 million, or 19%) in Great Britain are disabled. (<http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/>)
- Age: Unions cite age as the most common form of discrimination in the workplace.
- Gender: The gender pay gap (as measured by the median hourly pay excluding overtime of full-time employees) widened between 2007 and 2008. The gap between women's median hourly pay and men's was 12.8 per cent, compared with a gap of 12.5 per cent recorded in April 2007, when it was at its lowest since records began. (National Statistics Office)
- Race
- Religion
- Sexuality

A good place to start could be to record the demographics of your events. Are you inviting or hosting a disproportionate number of people from one section of the population? Is there a legitimate reason for this or is there more you could be doing to broaden your reach? This is a subtle but important part of a sustainable approach. Do you value the broadest possible input into your event, or are you happy with the status quo?

Follow Leo

Leo is determined that his event should go beyond having a neutral impact on the diversity of the audience, but should actually have a positive effect. On the application form to book places, Leo asks delegates about dietary requirements, access issues, and includes a space for any other relevant information relating to diversity.

As bookings are processed Leo receives an email of thanks from a disabled guest who comments that she felt really included in the planning process and was pleasantly surprised that her needs were being recognised so carefully. Leo tracks the demographics of his audience in order to establish whether more needs to be done to encourage inclusion from other groups. This research leads to data which will be included in the marketing plan for the following year's event to ensure that an appropriate audience is being targeted.

BS8901

BS8901 is the British Standard for sustainable event management. It's not the only way to run a sustainable event, but if you're looking for a place to start you could do a lot worse than investigating the standard.

The process of gaining BS8901 compliance follows a familiar model – planning, implementation and then feedback. During the planning phase it's vital to manage your supply chain and stakeholders and record all communications to show how your sustainable message is filtering down. Then it's a case of implementing this on the day, and crucially collecting feedback on your sustainable performance to learn lessons for future events.

BS8901 was introduced in November 2007, and while it has not been universally accepted by the event industry it does provide a uniform approach which has been endorsed by high level organisations such as the organisers of the London 2012 Olympics. It is scalable, and should be able to be implemented at large or small events.

BS8901 isn't the be all and end all when it comes to event sustainability. However, if you don't know where to begin, BS8901 could point you in the right direction. We believe it offers the best chance for industry wide consensus on a more sustainable approach.

Seventeen Events, the authors of this guide, were involved in trialling BS8901 in the summer of 2007 at the Innocent Village Fete. We worked with our clients, the Guardian and Observer newspapers, to ensure that all possible elements of the event were tracked and checked to ensure we were meeting the criteria of the standard.

Since BS8901 was published Seventeen have been active in promoting the standard and have been high profile ambassadors for the integration of sustainability into events. We have also been instrumental in pushing forward tools to help event organisers gain BS8901 compliance such as master-classes, supplier and venue directories and of course this guide.

We have also been working to build what we feel is the best available on-line system to manage your compliance to BS8901. Eventberry allows you to manage your compliance from any internet connection, and the basic system is free to use. See www.eventberry.com for more details.

BS8901 [continued]

2009 review and the road ahead

In 2009, BS8901 was subject to a review to try to fix some of the points of confusion which had arisen around the standard. Revisions included a more formal definition of the scope of compliance, an end to the three phase method of claiming compliance and a move to make some aspects of compliance such as the maturity matrix optional rather than compulsory. While these changes simplified the standard, it is fair to say it has not been watered down, and the core elements are still a great tool for managing sustainability at events.

Following this review the standard has not stood still. The standard is now on its way to being ratified as an international ISO standard, ISO 20121. Participating members from all over the world, including Seventeen Events, have been using BS8901 as a base to create a new interna-

tional benchmark for sustainable events. The standard is planned to be published to coincide with the 2012 Olympic Games, which will be fitting given LOCOG's involvement with its development.

As BS8901 is revised and modified we have continued to update this guide to reflect its content. Our online eventberry system is also reviewed regularly to ensure that it still offers users a practical way to manage their BS8901 compliance, as well as accommodating the new ISO 20121 standard as it comes online.

The key point, as always, is to keep these standards in perspective. They are a tool to help you, not an end in themselves. If you feel you're spending more time updating spreadsheets or filling in forms than actually making your events more sustainable, that should be a warning sign.

Carbon calculators and offsetting

We have not dedicated a lot of space to carbon offsetting, because we believe it is not a solution, and at worst can actually be a distraction from actually improving the sustainability of events.

Offsetting is a way of cancelling our carbon emissions by funding schemes that reduce an equivalent amount of carbon emissions elsewhere, such as through renewable energy projects in developing countries. The main problem is that offsetting moves the focus away from the real priority which is to reduce carbon emissions in the first place - allowing us to go on polluting. There are also numerous issues with offsetting schemes themselves.

- Questions have been raised about whether schemes do provide additional reductions, or if in fact these would have happened anyway, as has been shown to be the case in some instances.
- Offsetting schemes pay for reductions which will happen over time, and in the future. Since the emissions being offset are happening now, you would need to offset more than the equivalent amount of CO₂ to make up for the time lag.
- Tree planting schemes are to be avoided
- The calculators and measurements used both for calculating both the emissions and the reductions are fraught with complications, and rather inconsistent between providers. It is extremely difficult to prove with certainty that an activity or business is carbon neutral.

As long as you begin by being doing everything possible has been done to reduce emissions throughout the event process, offsetting can play a role in sustainable events. Some emissions, particularly those from travel, are unavoidable, and it can be worthwhile to offset these. Just make sure that you avoid greenwash and steer clear of seeing offsetting as a simple shortcut to a sustainable event.

If you choose to offset, make sure you compare several schemes and look at the details of what projects are being funded. There are various different certification schemes - at the time of writing a key one to look out for is gold standard CDM (clean development mechanism). It is worth investigating what's available currently. We'd recommend Climate Care as a major, business-orientated provider, and Atmosfair a non-profit based in Germany. (www.jpmorganclimatecare.com, www.atmosfair.de)

Carbon calculators, a key part of offsetting, can be a useful means of measuring the impact of energy use and transport, but their one size fits all approach can be difficult to adapt to events. More importantly, because impacts further up the supply chain, and wider sustainability issues such as pollution, biodiversity and ethical considerations are not measured, they are at best a rather blunt instrument for assessing an event.

Nonetheless, it can be useful to have a numerical measurement, especially for comparing annual events year on year and communicating with stakeholders. Most offsetting schemes have in built calculators, and there are a number of standalone calculators that can be a useful starting point for assessment including the government's Act on CO₂ calculator designed for individuals and the business calculator from the Carbon Trust, who can also undertake carbon surveys of businesses. (<http://actonco2.direct.gov.uk/index.html>, www.carbontrust.co.uk).

Seventeen standards

It can sometimes seem like there is a bewildering amount of information flying around. One reason we wanted to produce this guide was to offer one clear resource which you could access as a reference when planning an event. We have seventeen standards which we work to when planning our projects. If you can address each of these issues, then the chances are you're on the right lines. If you can track communications relevant to these points and show a clearly defined and organised supply chain, your events may even be BS8901 compliant without you realising it.

1 Energy demands

Have we considered all the potential extra demands which the event may have on energy supply?

2 Transport demands

Have we done our utmost to reduce consumptive travel associated with the event?

3 Air emissions

Have we planned the event in order to ensure that harmful emissions do not enter the air supply?

4 Water use

Have we planned the event to reduce the needless waste of water?

5 Land use

Have we considered the impact the event will have on the land around it?

6 Cultural impact

Is this event in any way discriminatory, offensive or divisive?

7 Waste and recycling

Is this an inherently wasteful event or have we planned it to reduce waste at source, reuse where possible, and recycle what can't be reused?

8 Ethical supply chain

Are we dealing with faceless suppliers or have we established relationships and partnerships with our supply chain to ensure that we all have the same aspirations for the event

9 Transparent relationships

How comfortable are we about being open and transparent in our relationships with suppliers and stakeholders?

10 Local sourcing

Where possible, are we sourcing goods and services from the local area rather than having them shipped in?

Seventeen standards [continued]

11 Security and safety

Have we become obsessed with sustainability to the detriment of health and safety?

12 Equality and diversity

Do equality and diversity have a role in events, or are they red tape to be dealt with as quickly as possible?

13 Community impact

Will this event have a positive effect on its surrounding community?

14 Financial impact

Is this event operating to a robust economic model, or has the money become secondary to the glitz and the glamour?

15 Stakeholder communication

Have we communicated to all stakeholders, at every stage, our sustainable approach to events?

16 Monitoring and feedback

Have we produced a clear and open feedback report after the event?

17 External communication

Are we using press, PR and marketing not just to blow our own trumpet, but also to show how sustainability can be ingrained in to an event

Venues checklist

Ask your suppliers to complete this checklist in more detail online at www.eventberry.com

Business

- Ask for copies of relevant policies – health and safety, sustainability, environmental and sustainable procurement policies if available.
- How well communicated are these – do staff receive training and is there a member of staff with responsibility for sustainability? Is information provided for guests?
- Check the employment terms of event staff.
- Is there anything else that would recommend the venue, e.g. heritage site, charity or social enterprise, regeneration area, an eco building?
- Does the venue restrict you to a preferred list of suppliers such as caterers and production companies?

Site

- Is the site in any way sensitive and at risk from the event, such as biodiversity or archaeological significance?
- Will the extra visitors have any positive or negative impact on the site or immediate area? Think in broad terms – for example bringing investment to the local economy, or causing soil erosion?

Energy

- What energy saving measures are in place? This could include systems such as low energy or motion sensor lighting, heating/cooling systems and also housekeeping measures about energy use.
- Where does the venue's energy supply come from?
- Is the event space lit by any natural daylight?
- Can the energy use of your event be measured?
- Does the venue have a Display Energy Certificate (DEC)? These are required in large public buildings such as Town Halls and museums, and can be displayed by any building.

Waste

- What recycling facilities does the venue have in place for event waste?
 - Glass
 - Metal
 - Plastics
 - Paper and card
 - Food waste compost
 - Specialised waste such as fabrics, batteries, printer cartridges etc.
- What sort of hand drying facilities are provided in toilet areas?
- Are split bins provided in the event area to sort different waste for recycling?

Venues checklist [continued]

Water

- What water saving measures are in place? This could include systems such as restricted flush or composting toilets, motion sensor taps and rainwater harvesting as well as clear housekeeping rules related to water use.
- Does the venue use eco friendly cleaning products?
- Are any water courses at risk from the event? (Outdoor sites)

Transport

- How close is the venue located for the majority of guests travelling to the event?
- How easy will it be for guests to reach the event by public transport?
- Does the venue have pedestrian and bicycle access? Are there any facilities such as bike racks?
- As an organiser, what can you do to provide, encourage and communicate better transport choices for your guests?

Access and equality

- Is the venue fully accessible to disabled guests? Preferably this should be by the same route as other guests. Are disabled toilets of a good standard?
- Does the venue have any of the following facilities:
 - Braille signage or floor signals for the visually impaired
 - Automatic doors
 - Hearing loop
 - Unisex baby changing facilities
 - Crèche

Catering checklist

Ask your suppliers to complete this checklist in more detail online at www.eventberry.com.

Business

- Ask for copies of relevant policies – health and safety, sustainability, environmental and sustainable procurement policies if available.
- How well communicated are these – for example will event staff be able to tell guests where food is sourced from?
- Check the employment terms of event staff.
- Is there anything else that would recommend the supplier, e.g. social enterprise, small community business, excellent CSR activities?

Energy

- What energy saving measures are in place? This could include efficient appliances and housekeeping measures about energy use.
- What energy supplier does the caterer use?
- How will the food be served – does it need to be kept hot for long periods?

Transport

- How local is the caterer to the event?
- If food is to be transported to the event, how far and by what means will it travel?
- Can you have a menu with no air freighted ingredients?

Menu

- Ask for details of sourcing for all key ingredients on the menu. Check that as far as possible these are:
 - seasonal
 - preferably locally sourced, or at least from the same country as the event. Support of small producers is best.
 - organic if possible
 - meat and eggs are free range
 - fish and seafood are not on the 'avoid' list at www.fishonline.org, specify Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified if possible
 - GM free
 - fresh, natural ingredients rather than highly processed foods.
- Cut down on the red meat on the menu – go for vegetarian or even vegan for the most sustainable route.
- Consider whether healthy options are on offer.
- Ask for Fairtrade products such as tea and coffee, sugar, chocolate and fruit.
- Will guests with special dietary requirements be catered for – do they have an option to ask in advance?

Catering checklist [continued]

Waste

- Try to be as accurate on guest numbers as possible. Check what is the latest date you can specify numbers.
- What serving ware will be used? – reusable is best
- If disposable serving ware or packaging is necessary, specify compostable or biodegradable materials.
- What will happen to food waste? Can it be composted or given to someone who can use it?
- Can any glass, plastic, paper or metal event waste be recycled?

Water

- Can tap water be served?
- Does the caterer have any water saving measures in place?

Print and branding checklist

Ask your suppliers to complete this checklist in more detail online at www.eventberry.com.

This very simple checklist that will apply to all event materials:

- Is it really needed? Really?
- Who made it?
- Where was it made?
- What is it made from and packaged in?
- What will happen to it after use?

For all products and suppliers

- Ask for copies of relevant policies – health and safety, sustainability, environmental and sustainable procurement policies if available.
- Where is the product or material sourced from and where is it printed? How is it transported? Look for local products and avoid air freight.
- Can evidence be provided of an ethical supply chain, ensuring fair and safe working conditions for the people who made the product?
- How will the product be packaged? Can the amount of packaging safely be reduced?
- Is there anything else that would recommend the supplier, e.g. charity or social enterprise, Fairtrade products, local producer?

Signage and venue branding

- Carefully establish what level of signage and branding is actually required at the venue.
- Can you utilise existing facilities where possible such as display screens?
- Again, try to design any printed materials to have life beyond the individual event using a generic company design that can be used for future events.
- Look for environmentally friendly options – such as chalkboards, organic cotton banners, recycled cardboard, biodegradable PVC.
- How will the materials be disposed of at the end of their life? Can they be recycled through normal waste collection, or can they be returned direct to the manufacturer for recycling?

Merchandise, giveaways, delegate packs and goody bags

- Can you really justify the need for the product? Is it something guests will genuinely want or a useless branded knick knack?
- Is there a sustainable option for the product? Choose recycled and reclaimed materials, natural fibres such as bamboo, organic cotton, FSC wood and corn starch.
- Look for unusual and innovative solutions such as making items out of your organisation's own waste material.
- What will happen to the product after use? Will it be of lasting use to the guest? Can it be recycled or composted?

Print and branding checklist [continued]

Printed materials

- Are you printing only the necessary documents? Conference handouts and presentations for instance may be better provided on a USB stick or website to be accessed as required rather than given out to every guest.
- Make sustainability a criterion at the design stage, rather than waiting till the printing. Design choices can minimise paper and ink usage, and cut down waste.
- Print double sided.
- Reduce margins and white space.
- Choose the smallest suitable format.
- Use a standard 'A' paper size to reduce wastage, as print presses are based around these.
- Avoid large blocks of ink.
- Avoid laminates, foil blocking and binding types that will make it harder to recycle paper after use.
- If possible, design printed materials to have life beyond the event, for example do not include the event date on folders so any spares may be used for future events.
- Specify 100% recycled post-consumer paper as standard. As a bare minimum requirement, part recycled or as a last resort FSC certified paper may be used.
- Opt for chlorine free, unbleached, 'natural white' or 'off white' paper, and the lightest gsm weight suitable for the item.
- Choose a printer with environmental credentials such as ISO 14001 or the Greenmark. Do they use low VOC vegetable based inks and minimise chemical use? Do they use a renewable energy supply?
- Get accurate estimates of quantities required and do not over order unnecessarily just because it is cheap to do so.
- Proof, proof and proof read again to avoid mistakes and costly reprints.

Production checklist

Ask your suppliers to complete this checklist in more detail online at www.eventberry.com.

Business

- Ask for copies of relevant policies – health and safety, sustainability, environmental and sustainable procurement policies if available.
- How well communicated are these – do staff receive training and is there a member of staff with responsibility for sustainability?
- Check the employment terms of event staff.
- Is there anything else that would recommend the supplier, e.g. social enterprise, small community business, excellent CSR activities?
- Ask the production manager to advise on the most sustainable, energy efficient set up for your specific event. Technology keeps developing, so look for a company with up to date knowledge and kit.

Energy

- What energy saving measures are in place? This could include efficient equipment and housekeeping measures about energy use.
- What energy supplier does the production company use?
- Get the specifications of equipment, and for each type, ask if there is a more efficient alternative. Specify LED lights wherever possible.
- Request that all equipment be turned off when not in use. On the day, check that this happens.

Set

(includes any structure such as stage set, exhibition stands, bespoke furniture etc)

- What materials are all set materials are made from? Check how sustainable these are. Look for interesting alternatives such as recycled fabrics and card.
- Specify any wood used is FSC certified.
- Choose stock sets which are reusable and reconfigurable.
- Avoid 'one use' materials such as stage felting and carpets where possible.
- If any waste materials will be generated, what will happen to these after the event?
- Look for alternatives to printed branding such as projection. Avoid event specific printed items such as those with the event date on them.

Production checklist [continued]

Transport

- Is there any in house kit at the venue that is suitable for your event?
- How local is the production company to the event?
- If equipment is to be transported to the event from a warehouse, how far and by what means will it travel?
- Is there an alternative which is nearer?
- How will production staff travel to the event?
- If equipment is coming from a number of suppliers, can any journeys be doubled up?

Waste

- If any waste materials will be generated, what will happen to these after the event?



Sustainable Events Guide

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