

Sustainable Events Guide

Indoor and Outdoor Events
within the Borough of Stevenage

Summer 2024



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“While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information provided in this sustainability events guide, Stevenage Borough Council cannot guarantee the completeness or suitability of the content for every individual or circumstances regarding their event. Users are encouraged to verify details and consider their own specific needs for their event before acting on any guidance in the guide. Stevenage Borough Council recognises that reducing impacts is an on-going process of improvement, and that resource and budget constraints of community event organisers will necessitate a pragmatic approach and prioritisation for their individual events”.

Introduction

The 2015 Paris Agreement (COP21) saw the commitment of 196 participating governments to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, ensuring a sustainable future. In alignment with this, the UK Government has enacted legislation for net-zero emissions by 2050 and a 78% reduction in emissions by 2035. Each year, new laws and guidance emerge, particularly in areas like plastics and materials, impacting various aspects of business, including events.

Recognising the environmental impact of corporate and community events, many Event Managers and community organisations express a keen interest in minimising their environmental impact. This goal can be accomplished by enhancing event efficiency and gradually implementing changes, beginning with strategic planning, and adhering to a comprehensive sustainability plan.

On the 12 June 2019, Stevenage Borough Council declared a climate emergency and reconfirmed its commitment to battling climate change by setting a target to ensure Stevenage has net-zero emissions by 2030.

Tackling climate change and improving sustainability is a key foundation for all council actions. This guide provides advice on how to manage and run your event sustainably. It outlines some simple steps that you can take to reduce the impacts of the various aspects of your operations. This guide has been developed by Stevenage Borough Council Events and Climate Change Team. The guidance is for use by event organisers.

Why consider environmental sustainability events?

- The global climate and ecological crisis requires every sector and business to commit to changes that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, prevent pollution, and protect ecosystems to safeguard the environment for future generations.
- Current and future changes to UK legislation and the expectations of local authorities to demonstrate environmental practices and report emissions mean that event organisers will need to adapt to changing requirements relating to funding, tendering, site permissions and licensing.
- Reducing environmental impacts using new technologies has other benefits for event organisers, such as cost savings, improved logistics and better audience experiences.
- Events can be a voice for positive change: they have a public profile, relationships with audiences, and the ability to model new ways of doing things and ideas.

What are the environmental impacts of events?

Events, whether they are concerts, conferences, festivals, or sporting events, can have various environmental impacts. These impacts can result from factors such as energy consumption, waste generation, transportation, and water usage.

To reduce all of these impacts of an event, these aspects should be considered. There are many small and easy steps you can take to begin making your events more green.

Here are some common environmental impacts associated with events:

Waste:

- Events generate substantial amounts of waste, including packaging, food waste, and promotional materials.
- Inadequate waste management can lead to pollution and environmental harm.
- Excess waste going into landfill contributes to other greenhouse gases emissions such as methane.
- Use of landfill sites causes challenges in relation to the space required to create them.
- Toilet waste from temporary toilets at your event will need to be disposed off.

Food and Drink:

- Eating, drinking, and disposing of the materials used to serve food and drink are very visible aspects of an audience experience. The way food and drink is sourced is of increasing concern to audiences generally, both in terms of environmental sustainability and the quality and range of food expected.

Power:

- Venues and equipment used for events often require significant energy, contributing to carbon emissions if sourced from non-renewable energy.
- Lighting, sound systems and climate control can be energy intensive.

Transport:

- Attendees, performers, and staff travelling to and from events generate their own carbon footprints depending on the chosen method of transport used.
- Traffic congestion and air pollution may result from large gatherings.

Water:

- Events may require significant water usage for various purposes, such as sanitation, landscaping, and catering.

Practical actions event organisers can take to reduce environmental impacts

Energy/Power

Traditional energy generation methods, such as burning fossil fuels, is a key cause of climate change due to the production of greenhouse gas emissions. Outdoor temporary events are mainly powered by diesel generators as their main source of energy. As well as climate impacts, there is growing concern and awareness about the contribution burning diesel makes to localised air pollution issues.

Organisations should try to::

- Opt for low carbon energy sources where appropriate
- Reduce energy use where possible
- Increase energy efficiency through power and energy processes
- Opt for low carbon energy sources

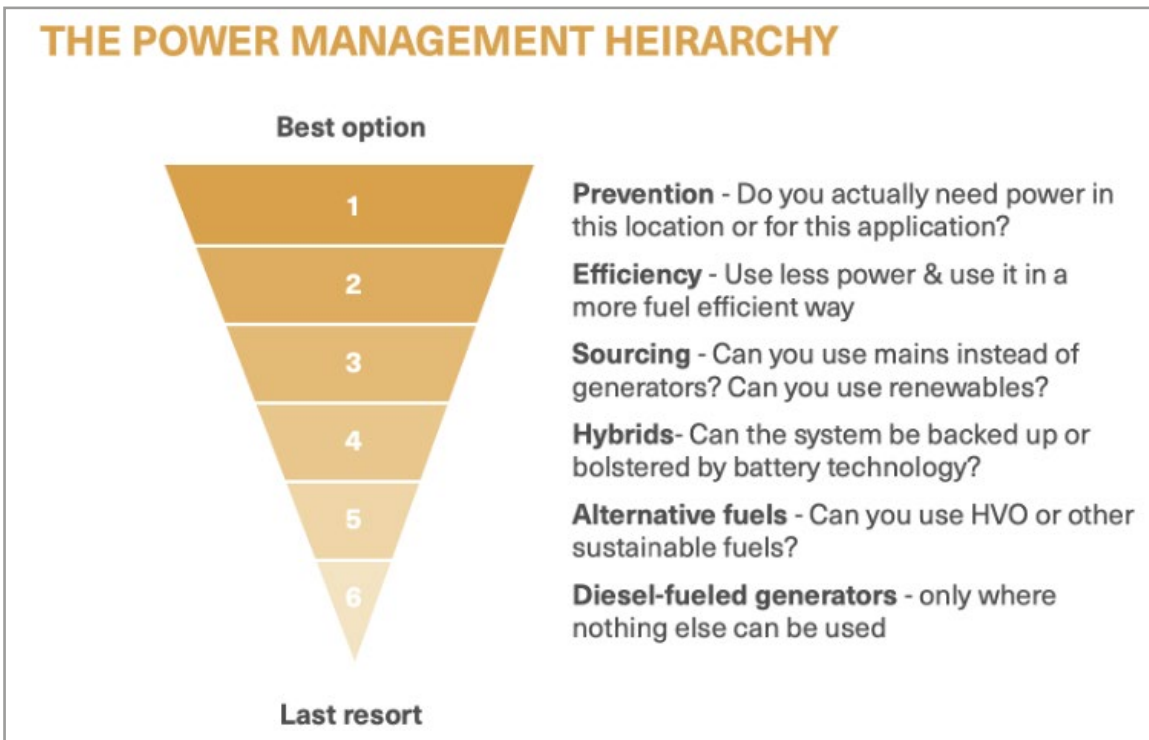
Best Practices

- Follow the Power Management Hierarchy when planning power at events (see below).
- Work with key stakeholders/suppliers/contractors to identify opportunities, e.g., lighting providers or catering providers.
- Work and communicate with power users to reduce demand. For example, LED stage lighting reduces power demand significantly.
- Collaborate with power users to precisely define requirements beforehand and align demand with onsite generation to minimise energy usage. For example, verify that power sources meet the necessary demand.
- Consider hybrid or solar options for your event.

Taking Action

The number one priority for any event looking to reduce their energy emissions is to reduce diesel consumption. A good starting point is to apply the principles of the Power Management Hierarchy to an event's power planning and procurement processes.

Energy sources at events: From best to worst for emissions.



Information regarding options 3 – 6 of the Power Management Hierarchy

1. Onsite renewable energy.
2. Grid connection, with a green tariff.
3. Grid connection, with a standard tariff.
4. Hybrid Generators.
5. Generators using lower carbon fuel such as HVO.
6. Generators using standard diesel.

Waste

At events, resources are brought in by different stakeholders: the organisation, suppliers, caterers, partners, and audiences. The main categories are typically:

- Production & decoration
- Audience
- Food & drinks

You should be aiming to:

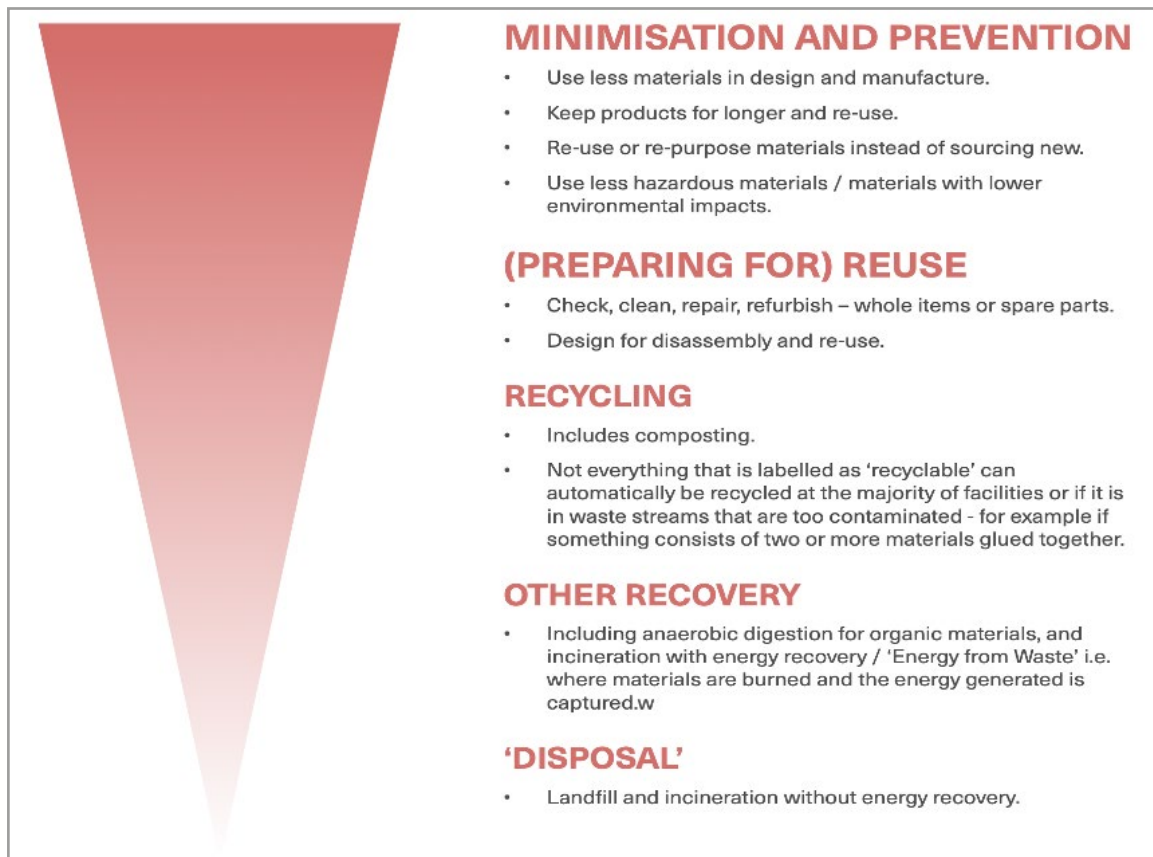
- Reduce the total amount of waste produced.
- Ensure that disposable materials can be recycled when they become waste.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of non-recyclable items.
- Reduce waste contamination at your event.

Best Practice(s)

- Follow the Waste Management Hierarchy when processing waste.
- Eliminate single use plastics.
- Implement Recycling initiatives at your event
- Decrease waste contamination at your event by clearly label recycling and waste bins to make sorting easier for attendees.

Taking Action

Under the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 all businesses are required to apply the Waste Management Hierarchy when managing and disposing of resources.



Methods for tackling waste at events cannot be implemented in isolation, as each element of the system is interdependent on another. It's also important to think about how the waste will be treated afterwards.

Plan...talk to your contractor(s).

- Traders – encourage them to use either recyclable or compostable food and drink. Communication before event to encourage attendees to bring re-usable boxes on the day.
- Make sure that the bins are clearly labelled, to ensure it is easy for users to correctly and conveniently dispose of their waste.
- Make sure bins are easy to see and that they can be spotted from any location in the event.
- Reduce the number of materials onsite and restrict to recyclable materials.
- Brief staff to separate waste when litter picking.
- Provide caterers and bars with recycling bins behind their stalls/tents.

Food and Beverages

The origin of food and drink has become a growing concern for consumers, encompassing both environmental sustainability and the expected quality and variety of food. The impact of food and drinks extends from the initial stages of production to consumption, influencing land use, wildlife, emissions related to transportation and storage, and more. Through adopting more sustainable food practices, event organisers can contribute to enhancing the health and well-being of visitors, supporting the livelihoods of farmers and producers, ensuring the welfare of farm animals, conserving precious wildlife and fish stocks, reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with food waste disposal, and promoting the long-term sustainability of our food system.

We can minimise the environmental impact of food on offer to audiences and staff at our events by improving the standards we set for the ingredients procured in our supply chains and by working closely with food providers to build trust and meet our aspirations.

You should be aiming to:

Look at the sustainability of the food and drink offering available at your event; for example:

- Offer low-carbon food options.
- Choose ethical and local suppliers.
- Minimise food waste.

Industry Best Practices

- Source local and seasonal produce where possible - Guide to seasonal food | National Trust
- You may wish to offer ‘low carbon’ or ‘plant based meals’ where possible
- Use sustainability sourced fish and sea food using Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified food to reduce the impact of over-fishing.
- Reduce the environmental impact of packaging and serveware associated with food. Use certified packaging (BS EN 13432) for food serveware.
- Reduce single-use packaging / replace single use items with reusable items.

Guidance on best practices for sourcing food and drink:

Food or Drink	Best practice for sourcing
Tea/Coffee	Where possible choose fairtrade
Milk	Offer plant based options where possible
Carbonated drinks	Where possible, aluminium cans should be used over glass or plastic bottles due to their highly recyclable nature. Bulk dispensers in combination with recycle cup schemes should also be considered.
Meat/fish	Make sure the welfare of the animal has been guaranteed by a set standard for example Red Tractor or Marine Stewardship Council
Vegetables	Where possible choose local and seasonal

* Various plant based milks having varying carbon emissions, land use and freshwater use - Dairy vs. plant-based milk: what are the environmental impacts? - Our World in Data

Taking Action

The most effective steps that can be taken to reduce food impacts are:

- Reducing products which have a high negative impact on the environment, such as animal-based products and provide a wider range of plant based products..
- Increasing in-season produce and choose organic where possible
- Purchasing products that are certified as sustainably grown, caught, reared, manufactured, brewed, and harvested etc.
- Reducing food waste by considering:
 - » Menu design / choice of ingredients.
 - » Service format, i.e., buffet vs. plated.
 - » Repurposing edible leftover food.
- Using pricing as a lever for influencing audience food purchase choices.
- Use of alternative plant-based milk products.
- Reduce food waste and putting edible surplus food to good use.
- Work with traders to reduce food waste by estimating food requirements.
- Plan with organisation(s) who can take edible left-over food at the end of the event. This is often a welcomed service for traders and can reduce waste costs for the event.

Reducing waste materials from serving food and drink:

- Try to use dispensing stations where possible.
- Reduce disposable plastics on bars by bulk dispensing rather than serving in individual containers e.g. using kegs, taps and concentrates rather than alcohol and soft drinks in cans and bottles.
- Ensure that all vendors use compostable serveware to minimise environmental impact and facilitate composting with food waste.
- Think about using reusable cups at bars when suitable. It's even better to encourage participants to bring their own reusable cups. Event organisers could set up a cup hire scheme to cut down on waste and encourage a shift in behaviour.

Transport

Events can often influence rather than control how their audience choose to travel. This is often easier for fenced rural events than unfenced free-to-access city centre events because organisers can control the parking in rural areas. Larger events are expected to have a Traffic Management Plan in place as part of their license approval, which would include detail about how they intend to manage how people arrive and leave from their event. For smaller events, it may be the case that you expect most people to arrive on foot, bicycle, car or public transport, but considering what you can do to encourage sustainable options is still worthwhile.

You should be aiming to:

- Increase car occupancy by encouraging car sharing.
- Encourage people to use public transport – buses, trains or coaches.
- Encourage people to walk or cycle.
- Look to add local information such as: Information on bus stops, bus locations, train station, cabs and EV cabs, cycleway, bike parking areas

How you can do it:

- Communicate clear travel information in advance – e.g. a map of site with the nearest bus stops and other local links clearly marked on the website or a flyer, and links to bus timetables. Traffic in the local area during an event can be very busy.
- Provide a bike parking area.
- Provide dedicated buses and coaches where demand is high enough and its feasible – try to work with local service providers to meet the peaks of demand.
- Provide good information and signage onsite for when the audience is leaving the event.

Local transport information:

Bus Stops and Locations in Stevenage:

Stevenage boasts a comprehensive bus service, managed by operators such as Arriva, which effectively links the town centre with nearby areas including Letchworth, Luton, Hemel Hempstead, as well as various outlying suburbs, villages, and towns. Real-time schedules and route maps for buses in Stevenage are readily available on platforms like Moovit, offering convenience and accessibility to commuters. Additionally, individuals seeking more in-depth information about bus services, stops, and routes in Stevenage can visit the Stevenage Borough Council's website for details.

Train Station in Stevenage

Situated at Lytton Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 1XT, Stevenage Railway Station offers a range of amenities including ticket machines, customer information screens, waiting rooms, and more. For up-to-date departure and arrival information, commuters can access the National Rail website.

Cycleways and Cycling

Stevenage boasts a well-planned cycleway network spanning over 25 miles, reflecting its design as a new town. This extensive off-road network enables cyclists to explore Stevenage's various attractions and points of interest conveniently. For those seeking detailed cycling routes, a comprehensive cycle map of Stevenage is available on the Stevenage Borough Council's website.

Bike parking areas in Stevenage

Stevenage offers designated bike parking areas to cater to cyclists' needs. Adjacent to Stevenage Railway Station, the recently constructed multi-storey car park features a dedicated, covered space capable of securely accommodating 80 bicycles. Additionally, the Stevenage Cycling Hub serves as another option for secure bike parking.

Please note that for the most accurate and up-to-date information, it's best to check the respective websites or contact the service providers directly.

Water

Safety and availability of water is vital for all events, but using the least amount of water possible is often less considered. Some events have experienced the impact of water scarcity, as some local authorities have banned the filling of road tankers when restrictions are in place. When this happens, water must be sourced from further afield.

One significant environmental impact related to water is the use of disposable plastic bottles. Using plastic bottles, rather than reusable bottles or cups, wastes resources caused by transportation and production and creates an unnecessary product which needs to be disposed of.

What you can do:

- Provide easy and visible access to taps for drinking water where viable to do so.
- If you are installing any temporary taps; use reduced flow taps with timed release (push taps) or sprinkler fittings to reduce water wastage from public taps. This also helps prevent flooding around water stations.
- Source water from mains where possible, rather than using bottled water.
- Provide staff and crew with re-usable bottles (or ask them to bring their own) to reduce disposable plastics. If available drinking water is on site. Alternatively, you could explore the possibility of providing water in cardboard containers.
- Consider water efficient or waterless toilets such as composting portaloo's which omit the use of any chemicals or water allowing for safer treatment of waste. After each event, the waste is broken down naturally to produce organic matter which is then returned to the soil as a renewable fertiliser.

Resources and Useful Links

Here is a list of links which you may find useful:

[Creative Climate Tools | Julie's Bicycle | Sustainability Strategy Tools \(juliesbicycle.com\)](#)

[Resources | Julies Bicycle | Culture & Climate Support](#)

Sustainable energy for festivals - <https://www.powerful-thinking.org.uk/>

<https://www.stevenagecyclinghub.co.uk/>

<http://rawfoundation.org/making-waves/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Festival-Guide-20181.pdf>

<https://juliesbicycle.com/resource/sustainable-procurement-guide/>

[Waste Management at Outdoor Events Guide - Julie's Bicycle \(juliesbicycle.com\)](#)

[Campaigns - Sustrans.org.uk](#)

[Sustainable Materials and Waste Management Toolkit - Vision 2025](#)

<https://redtractor.org.uk/>

<https://www.mcsuk.org/ocean-emergency/sustainable-seafood/frequently-asked-questions/#introduction>

<https://ourworldindata.org/environmental-impact-milks>