

Sustainable events

A guide for organisations in Scotland



natural
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SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Zero Waste Scotland
works with businesses,
communities, individuals
and local authorities to
help them reduce waste,
recycle more and use
resources sustainably.

Summary

Organising an event, be it a small meeting or a major festival, can be a complex and time consuming activity. Extensive guidance exists on how to manage the social and economic impacts of events, but guidance on how to manage the environmental impacts is less readily available.

This Guide provides practical advice for Scottish businesses, organisations and individuals to ensure their events are planned and undertaken in an environmentally sustainable manner. It offers ideas to reduce the environmental impact of an event that are not costly financially or in terms of time and resources. It outlines a broad series of measures applicable to a wide range of organisations. Anyone organising, hosting or attending an event in Scotland will benefit from the advice given.

The Guide is divided into a number of sections that cover common environmental considerations and impacts of event organisation, including:

- **venue selection;**
- **transport and travel;**
- **energy – power, lighting, heating and cooling;**
- **catering; and**
- **waste management.**

Throughout the Guide, case studies are used to illustrate examples of good practice and details are given of publications that will be of help in organising a sustainable event.

All the ideas and topics featured in this Guide should help organisers to save money and protect the environment whilst maintaining or enhancing the quality of the event.



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Introduction to the Guide



Organisers of a sustainable event should manage its social, economic and environmental impacts while ensuring that the event itself will produce and promote lasting benefits, both locally and globally.

1.1 What this Guide is for

This Guide provides practical advice for Scottish businesses, organisations and individuals to ensure their events are planned and undertaken in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Seminars, conferences, social events, training days, etc are all planned to achieve a positive outcome (e.g. knowledge transfer, enjoyment or developing skills). However, it is essential to understand that staging such an event can also result in negative environmental impacts (e.g. carbon emissions associated with travel, waste produced and energy used). The information in this Guide provides useful advice to help organisers manage events responsibly and minimise these impacts.

1.2 Who should use this Guide

Organisers and other stakeholders associated with business meetings, conferences, music concerts, highland games, arts festivals and many more events besides will find this Guide beneficial. It outlines a broad series of measures applicable to a wide range of organisations. In fact, anyone organising, hosting or attending an event in Scotland will benefit from following the advice given.

Irrespective of the event type, the main drivers that make it sustainable will be the same. Therefore, this Guide is applicable for events of all types.

Note: Public sector bodies may find the information in this Guide useful. However, they must ensure that they follow the appropriate Public Sector Procurement rules and policies, and these must take priority over any advice given in this Guide.



1.3 How to use this Guide

This easy-to-use Guide will give you an overview of the issues you should consider when planning an event. The Guide is split into several key areas for consideration and its advice can be easily applied to any type of event.

The Guide gives an overview of the need to consider each issue, and the key factors you should be looking at when planning an event. It also provides a series of ideas, tips and suggestions that will improve the sustainability of your event. Case studies have been included throughout to highlight success and what can be achieved. Further information can be found by using the resources suggested at the end of the Guide.

1.4 When to use this Guide

Fig 1 shows the lifecycle of all events, irrespective of type¹. It is during the planning and monitoring & control phases where this Guide will provide the greatest benefits, and have the most relevance and biggest impact in achieving a sustainable event.

Monitoring and control should involve measuring the environmental performance of an event. This is crucial in understanding the effectiveness of the sustainability measures put in place, setting future targets and aiming for improvement. It is also a means of providing feedback for stakeholders (e.g. sponsors and attendees) on environmental performance.

Effective post-event evaluation can provide the basis for discussion with the venue to optimise the environmental performance of any future event you may stage at a particular location. To help with this, it is a good idea to ask attendees to provide feedback on environmental considerations (e.g. electronically or on a form made from recycled paper). In addition, keep a record of waste produced, and water and energy used, etc for all aspects of your event. This need not be onerous and is something that the venue may be able to help with. Further information on setting targets, indicators, and monitoring and measuring success is given in the publication *Measuring to Manage – A 'how to' guide* available online².

Fig 1 Lifecycle stages of an event



¹ Event stages defined in BS 8901 Specification for a Sustainable Event Management System

² <http://envirowise.wrap.org.uk/>: *Measuring to Manage: A 'how to' guide* (Publication Code GG707R)



1.4.1 Determining success

- A key performance indicator (KPI) is a pre-agreed measurement, either quantitative or qualitative, of performance against the objectives of the organisation³. KPIs provide the event organiser or a funding body with the tools for assessing the performance of the event against sustainability objectives. KPIs can therefore be used to help event organisers implement strategies with clearly defined targets and benchmarks⁴.
- Following an event, it is a good idea to email attendees and other stakeholders to inform them of the successes and areas for improvement (e.g. energy savings and percentage of waste recycled). Transparency is a key principle of sustainability. People do not expect you to be perfect, but they do expect you to try your best.
- Review the full range of strategies you could adopt as suggested in this Guide and see what additional ones could be used in future.

Sustainable festivals

Festivals Edinburgh is the high-level organisation created and managed by the directors of Edinburgh's 12 major festivals to take the lead on the joint strategic development of these festivals. Festivals Edinburgh works in close co-operation with Edinburgh City Council's Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) to reduce the impact of its activities and promote sustainability.

Each festival has its own environmental challenges and varies in terms of size, number of attendees, location and venue. Therefore, the first step for Festivals Edinburgh in developing a sustainability strategy was to review the progress already made by individual festivals (many of which had made significant sustainability improvements on their own initiative). A detailed questionnaire was completed by the management team of each festival so that Festivals Edinburgh could gain information on work done to date, and to assess and identify priority areas for action. From here, Festivals Edinburgh identified the sustainability challenges facing the festivals as a whole and individual areas of priority action specific to each.

By working together through Festivals Edinburgh, the directors of individual festivals have developed comprehensive environmental policies and have coordinated their work with the SDU to gain the maximum benefit. Each festival now has a detailed implementation plan to guide its activities, helping to prioritise actions over specified periods as well as setting targets, KPIs and monitoring/reporting arrangements.

Case study

³ KPI definition used in BS 8901 Specification for a Sustainable Event Management System

⁴ Further advice on selecting environmental KPIs and setting targets or benchmarks can be found in: *Environmental Key Performance Indicators – Reporting Guidelines for UK Business* available from www.defra.gov.uk

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1.4.2 Identify issues

- Use the KPIs and feedback as key considerations that must be factored into an overall evaluation of the event.
- Determine actions that could be easily addressed and identify a strategy for doing so.
- Investigate incidences of non-conformance and note lessons that need to be learned.

1.4.3 Communicate your results

- If you have successfully delivered a sustainable event, publicise it to interested parties by email, in newsletters, on your website or via other means of communication.
- Report progress made towards KPI targets to let everyone see how much you are improving.



Remember, it may not be possible to follow all the suggestions made in this Guide and there will always be room for improvement. Post-event evaluation allows you to see where you performed less well and will highlight problem areas that need to be addressed next time.

Drivers for change

2

Many factors contribute to the need to manage events in a sustainable manner. These include global drivers (e.g. climate change) and local drivers (e.g. the need to encourage the growth of local businesses). Some drivers are subject to legislation that must be considered during event planning, while others are optional and can be adopted on a 'best practice' basis. Below are some of the drivers that feed into the need to deliver more sustainable events.

2.1 Legislation

- **Climate Change (Scotland) Act** – this places a duty on all public bodies and, therefore, by default, on their supply chain, to conduct their activities in a manner that minimises greenhouse gas emissions so that progress can be made towards cutting Scotland's emissions by 42% by 2020 and 80% by 2050. The Act allows for secondary legislation that will be introduced in due course to reduce the impact of commercial activities.
- **Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) Regulations** – all organisations and businesses have a legal responsibility to conduct their activities in an environmentally responsible manner and, in particular, to ensure that any waste produced is disposed of safely and within the law.





2.2 Industry standards

- **BS 8901 Specification for a Sustainable Event Management System** – this was introduced in 2007 and has been produced to help organisations facilitate sustainable event management systems. It provides a uniform approach to event management that has been endorsed by many organisations, including the London 2012 Olympics Delivery Authority.
- **ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems** – this international standard lays out criteria against which businesses and organisations can design, manage and audit their internal processes to ensure quality is maintained. The environmental impact of an organisation's processes, including those related to events, should be factored into its quality management system.
- **ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems** – this international standard specifies how businesses and organisations should conduct their activities in a manner that minimises negative environmental impacts. Organisations delivering events should consider the environmental impacts of these events within their environmental management system.

2.3 Commercial factors

- **Cutting costs** – improving event sustainability requires a reduction in resource and energy demands. As resource and energy costs escalate, reducing consumption not only cuts costs, but also offers environmental benefits and makes good economic sense.

- **Customer expectations and winning new business** – customer demands to reduce the environmental impact of business activities are influencing purchasing decisions at individual and organisational levels. Therefore, event organisers must reflect these expectations in their offering to win and retain happy customers. By developing and implementing a particularly effective environmental policy, you can create a unique selling point for your event.
- **Public relations** – the market for events is highly congested with many competing demands for your customers' time and money. Therefore, ensuring your event establishes and maintains a positive and high-profile public-relations image is critical. High environmental standards can attract media interest and help ensure that the risk of negative media coverage is minimised.

2.4 Corporate social responsibility

- **Securing the Future** – the UK's Sustainable Development Strategy⁵ stresses the importance of living within environmental limits. This not only applies to Central Government and the devolved administrations, but also to businesses, households and individuals. Every year, millions of people around the world attend meetings or conferences and even more attend trade shows, concerts or exhibitions. Therefore, it is critical that event planners play their part in achieving these overall objectives by minimising the environmental impact of their particular events.

⁵ *Securing the Future – Delivering UK sustainable development strategy* available from www.defra.gov.uk

Key issues checklist

3

Events vary considerably in their complexity, but there are common themes that apply to them all. Key issues that you should address during your planning include:

- ✓ **Venue selection –**
the most important decision that impacts on the sustainability of any event is the venue selection. This single decision will ultimately determine the extent to which you can implement any of the advice given in this Guide.
- ✓ **Transport and travel –**
effective planning and providing useful information for all your stakeholders can encourage travel by sustainable means. This will reduce the impact of people and materials being transported to and from your venue.
- ✓ **Suppliers –**
exploiting the policies and procedures put in place by your suppliers will be critical in determining the sustainability of your event.
- ✓ **Energy –**
improvements in how you heat, cool, light and power your event can have a big impact on minimising your energy use and cutting your costs.
- ✓ **Catering –**
focusing on the sustainable sourcing, subsequent preparation and portion control for catered food and its associated consumables will significantly reduce the impact of your event and bring benefits throughout your supply chain.
- ✓ **Waste disposal and recycling –**
effective planning will help keep your waste costs to a minimum, maximise recycling and avoid landfill disposal.

The remainder of this Guide provides detailed advice on how to make a positive impact on these issues.

4

Venue selection

All events will lead to some level of environmental impact, whether through energy use, food preparation, transport or waste requiring disposal. However, there are many ways of reducing this impact and choosing the right venue is critical in achieving this. A venue with a strong track record of environmental improvement can make the delivery of a sustainable event significantly more straightforward. This section of the Guide will help you to identify such venues.

The venue's location is a critical factor as this impacts on all environmental issues related to travel. Information on transport and travel factors to be considered in venue selection can be found in Section 5.

4.1 Key considerations

Useful questions about sustainability standards to ask a potential venue include:

- ✓ **Does the venue have an environmental policy or is it otherwise certified (e.g. ISO 14001, BS 8555)?** ISO 14001 is the international standard for implementing environmental management systems. BS 8555 is a British Standard that guides the phased implementation of an environmental management system. Many venues will post their environmental policies on their websites or in other public areas of their property (e.g. in the entrance foyer).
- ✓ **Is the venue registered with the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS)?** This is a membership-based scheme that offers a nationally recognised sustainable tourism certification and is operated in Scotland in partnership with Visit Scotland. The Scheme uses experienced assessors to grade a site against strict criteria covering areas such as water, energy and waste management, and then awards a grade based on performance.
- ✓ **Is the venue certified to BS 8901 – Sustainable Event Management System?** As this standard is aimed at event management organisers, venues that regularly organise or host events may already be certified. BS 8901 is part of the BS 8900 series of standards that focus on sustainable development. The BS 8901 standard is applicable to event clients, organisers, venues and suppliers. It follows the model of 'Plan – Do – Check – Act'.



Regardless of the type and size of event, it is sensible to work with suppliers to encourage the use of sustainable practices. To achieve this, it is a good idea to develop simple assessment criteria for areas that are important to review. Ask your venue the following questions:

- ✓ **Is there a designated 'green team' or individual with responsibilities for environmental improvement?**
- ✓ **Has the venue developed and implemented a policy to buy sustainable products?**
- ✓ **Does the venue have a recycling policy and facilities, and are venue staff trained in their use?**
- ✓ **Has the venue implemented any water minimisation features (e.g. flow controls on toilets and taps)?**
- ✓ **Does the venue buy electricity produced from renewable sources?**
- ✓ **Does the venue operate a 'green laundry' policy (i.e. is it acting to reduce consumption of water and harmful chemicals)?**

Having asked these questions consider the following actions:

- ✓ **Liase with your venue to ensure it is not overheated. If it is too hot, this will raise costs, increase carbon emissions and reduce the comfort of your attendees. Thermal comfort levels vary from person to person and the level of physical activity at your event. CIBSE⁶ recommendations for comfort levels in meeting rooms are 21-23°C in winter and 22-24°C in summer.**
- ✓ **Seek advice from your venue on where to locate stands and displays to maximise the use of natural light.**
- ✓ **Ensure the event and venue staff know not to leave windows and doors open when the heating is on.**
- ✓ **Instruct venue staff that, wherever possible, you require lighting and appliances to be switched off when not in use.**

4.2 Further information

Zero Waste Scotland can provide support to event venues to help them improve resource efficiency and cut costs. The Zero Waste Scotland website (www.zerowastescotland.org.uk) is packed with useful tools and publications providing detailed advice on where to target effort and how to deliver improvement. Case studies that are downloadable from the website that may be of particular interest to venues seeking to improve their sustainability, include:

- **Edinburgh International Conference Centre – *Conference centre measures performance and monitors savings* (publication code CS917).**
- **Best Western Kings Manor Hotel Edinburgh – *Hotel saves money with resource efficiency* (publication code CS830).**

For those seeking in-depth support, Zero Waste Scotland can provide expert technical advice by telephone and may be able to arrange a site visit to highlight opportunities for low- or no-cost improvements. To access these services call the Zero Waste Scotland Helpline on 0808 100 2040.

GTBS is the national sustainable tourism certification scheme for the UK. Originally developed in 1997 in partnership with Visit Scotland, it is now the only certification scheme validated by Visit Britain, through the International Centre for Responsible Tourism. For information about how the GTBS can help your venue, please visit www.green-business.co.uk or telephone 01738 632162.

Information on industry standards on sustainability can be found at:

- **International Organization for Standardization (www.iso.org).**
- **British Standards Institution (www.bsigroup.com).**

⁶ Chartered Institute of Building Service Engineers www.cibse.org

5

Transport and travel

Transport accounts for about a quarter of all UK greenhouse gas emissions⁷. Therefore, a major environmental impact from your event will come from transporting people and materials to and from the venue. Maximising the use of public transport and optimising deliveries of materials to your venue provides the best means of minimising this impact.

While effective transport planning is critical in achieving these objectives, poor venue selection will undermine all subsequent efforts to minimise transportation impacts. Therefore, a suitable venue close to good public transport links is highly desirable.

5.1 Key considerations

Reduce the need for travel by:

- ✓ considering whether the event is really necessary or if video or teleconferencing would be a suitable alternative;
- ✓ making use of venue locations that have good public transport links;
- ✓ investigating if the venue has a travel plan in place already that you will be able to use for your event;
- ✓ publicising the public transport options available to attendees through the full range of communications channels such as the event flyer, e-communications and the event website. Provide information on the routes and locations from bus stops, train stations and local accommodation;
- ✓ determining if existing public transport services will be able to cope with the scale of your event and, if not, see if you can arrange for additional services to be laid on;
- ✓ recommending accommodation that is within walking distance of your venue and provide clear directions to and from the venue;
- ✓ providing incentives for using public transport and minimising car use (e.g. free minibus shuttles, limited car spaces and charges for parking);

⁷ *The Energy Challenge*
Energy Review Report,
BERR, 2006.





- ✓ considering laying on specific transport (e.g. minibuses) from the nearest train stations and recommending nearby hotels if public transport is not suitable or adequate;
- ✓ where permissible, providing delegates with contact details of other attendees travelling from neighbouring locations allowing them to car share; and
- ✓ identifying routes for car users that minimise disruption to the local community, nearby car parks and suitable routes to these.

Other transport issues to consider include:

- ✓ finding out if the venue can provide all your material requirements without the need for additional deliveries;
- ✓ determining to what extent you can use local suppliers;
- ✓ if deliveries are required, establishing how many will be required and the distance they have to travel;
- ✓ liaising with your suppliers to determine whether they can share delivery vehicles;
- ✓ contacting your suppliers to determine if they can suggest ways to minimise delivery road miles;
- ✓ creating a suppliers' travel plan if contractors' transport movements are important for your event; and
- ✓ investigating ways to reduce the number of delivery and service vehicles that may have to visit your site by following sustainable procurement guidance.

Provide sustainable travel information to those attending your events including:

- ✓ downloadable maps of the best walking or cycling routes to the venue and the estimated journey timings from key locations and public transport connections;
- ✓ public transport routes and timetables;
- ✓ sustainable travel advice for people with disabilities (e.g. bus services with wheelchair access);
- ✓ special arrangements to reduce car use (e.g. shuttle buses from railway stations);
- ✓ incentives for using public transport or car sharing (e.g. discounted tickets);
- ✓ access routes for cars and parking facilities to reduce congestion; and
- ✓ information that would encourage car sharing (e.g. contact details of individuals travelling from similar locations if permissible).

5.2 Further information

The Energy Saving Trust (EST) in Scotland provides a Travel Planning Service for businesses and organisations. This is particularly aimed at venues receiving over 10,000 visitors per year. The EST website provides information on this and other EST services (www.energysavingtrust.org.uk).

Information on journey planning by bus, coach or train can be obtained from Traveline Scotland (www.travelinescotland.com).

Advice from the Scottish Government on sustainable transport options can be found on the Choose Another Way website (www.chooseanotherway.com).

Information on promoting car sharing can be found on the *liftshare* website (www.liftshare.com).

6

Supply chains and contracts

Organising an event, regardless of size, duration, location or type, will create a supply chain of product and service providers. This supply chain will inevitably consume natural resources and generate negative environmental impacts. However, as a customer with buying power, you can use your influence to reward businesses that take sustainability seriously and encourage those that do not to change their approach.

Mechanisms such as tenders, contracts and service-level agreements have the potential to be valuable tools for promoting sustainability and influencing supplier behaviour. Making it clear to your suppliers that their approach to sustainability is a key factor in winning work will inevitably have a positive influence on their innovation and service provision.

Note: Public sector bodies may find the information here of interest. However, they must ensure that they follow the appropriate Public Sector Procurement rules and policies, and these must take priority over any advice given in this Guide.





6.1 Key considerations

Sustainable procurement can be summarised as:

- ✓ considering environmental provenance when purchasing products or conducting business;
- ✓ an instrument to help provide a reduction in a company's environmental impact by improving its 'green' credentials;
- ✓ a tool to influence the supply chain; and
- ✓ a process integral to sustainable development.

Sustainable procurement hinges upon asking your suppliers to adhere to certain environmental criteria before a purchase is made or a contract is signed. Used intelligently, it promotes a closer working relationship between supplier and buyer. Both parties benefit as environmental impact is taken into consideration, which mitigates risk and leads to improved 'green credentials' that can be marketed to other potential customers.

Practical examples of action you can take on sustainable procurement are:

- ✓ including clauses in any contracts that require suppliers to comply with your sustainability policy;
- ✓ asking for evidence of a supplier's environmental credentials (e.g. membership of GTBS, ISO 14001 accreditation or company environmental policy);
- ✓ setting monitoring and measurement standards to set targets that can be checked after the event;
- ✓ ensuring suppliers can, and do, manage energy and other resources as efficiently as possible;

- ✓ ensuring suppliers have recycling and other waste reduction policies in place;
- ✓ ensuring suppliers are aware of, and comply with, venue sustainability requirements; and
- ✓ asking what suppliers do to minimise deliveries and food miles.

6.2 Further information

Sustainable procurement is an area where detailed advice can be beneficial. Zero Waste Scotland has produced a series of excellent publications and tools on this subject. These can be downloaded from the website (www.zerowastescotland.org.uk) and include:

- *A Guide To Green Procurement* (publication code GG921);
- *Sharing success: profiting from supply chain partnerships* (publication code EN784);
- *Supply Chain Partnership Toolkit* (publication code IT704).

Further information on sustainable procurement can be obtained from:

- Sustainable Procurement Information Network (www.s-p-i-n.co.uk);
- Forum for the Future (www.forumforthefuture.org).

7

Energy – power, lighting, heating and cooling

Energy consumption is a major contributor to the production of the greenhouse gases that are responsible for man-made climate change. Fortunately, energy consumption, particularly electricity and its associated financial and environmental costs, is one of the most straightforward things to improve through effective and sustainable events planning.

Businesses and other organisations can access a wide range of information, advice and support to tackle energy use, and it is strongly recommended that you take advantage of these opportunities. This section has the more modest aim of identifying some quick wins that will help you reduce the energy consumption associated with your event.

7.1 Key considerations

Reduce the energy consumption of your event by following this advice:

- ✓ **Ask your venue what policies and technologies it has in place to reduce energy consumption and seek guidance on how to make best use of these during your event.**
- ✓ **Ask if your venue purchases its energy in a sustainable way (e.g. using a 'green energy' tariff).**
- ✓ **Ask your venue to record how much energy is used during your event and to report this to you, including energy used during set-up and break-down phases.**
- ✓ **Make sure all event and venue staff are made aware of the need to conserve energy and what actions they can safely take to achieve this.**
- ✓ **Choose a venue that is an appropriate size for the event; larger rooms use more energy to heat or cool.**
- ✓ **Use a venue that maximises natural light; use artificial lighting only where and when it is required.**
- ✓ **Arrange stands and display areas to maximise use of natural light.**
- ✓ **Control the thermostat – heating a room above 24°C wastes energy and reduces comfort.**
- ✓ **Use natural ventilation wherever possible rather than air-conditioning.**





- ✓ Make sure all equipment is switched off when not in use.
- ✓ Specify that low energy appliances are used by your venue and service providers.
- ✓ Run audio visual presentations from laptop computers as they consume up to 90% less electricity than desktop computers.
- ✓ If practicable, encourage people to use stairs rather than lifts.
- ✓ Conduct an energy walk around during breaks and at the end of the event to check if any appliances or lights have been left on unnecessarily.

Carbon offsetting should be considered only after you have taken the steps necessary to reduce your total energy use. It is important that consideration be given in detail to the scheme you select and the types of project they implement as concern has been raised surrounding the value of some offsetting schemes.

7.2 Further information

Information on reducing energy consumption can be obtained free from:

- **The Carbon Trust**, which helps larger businesses and organisations reduce carbon emissions and save money. This is achieved by providing support such as expert advice and interest-free loans (www.carbontrust.co.uk); and
- **The Energy Saving Trust**, which promotes action that reduces carbon emissions by smaller businesses and individuals using a variety of initiatives such as providing advice, support and signposting (www.energysavingtrust.org.uk).

7.1.1 Carbon offsetting

Offsetting involves calculating your carbon emissions and then purchasing 'credits' from emission reduction projects. These projects prevent or remove an equivalent amount of carbon dioxide elsewhere, meaning that the overall effect is zero.

Carbon neutral meetings at Radisson Hotel

The Radisson Blu Hotel on Edinburgh's Royal Mile is one of Scotland's most desirable event venues. The Hotel's Green Team has led a series of innovative initiatives, structured around a programme entitled **Responsible Business**, to reduce the environmental impact of its business activities. The team's hard work, leadership and achievements have received external recognition through the presentation of the 'Gold' award from the GTBS and winning Visit Scotland's prestigious 'Thistle Award' for Sustainable Tourism.

Since 2007, as part of the hotel's commitment to cutting the climate change impact of its operations, all meetings and events held there have been carbon neutral. Carbon emission calculations have been produced by the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Management. Offsetting projects have been undertaken through the CarbonNeutral Company and are independently audited and certified as 'new projects'. These include helping with an African energy efficient stove project and the Carrifran Wildwood tree-planting project in Dumfries and Galloway.

Case study

8

Catering

Food production and transportation have a serious impact on the global environment. The UK food supply chain annual emissions exceed an equivalent of 100 million tonnes of carbon dioxide⁸. Impacts on water use and biodiversity are recognised as problem issues in countries that export food. Managing your catering in a sustainable way can go a long way to reducing the environmental impact of an event.

Sustainable food is not just about considering the distance that food travels from field to plate; the food we buy can have a big impact on our health and the local economy too.

Water consumption in agriculture is a particular issue in some water-stressed countries that produce food for export. Other problems, such as the destruction of rainforests to meet international demands for palm oil used in many processed foods, mean that purchasing decisions about food can have a global impact.

When you are organising catering for your event, think about buying and providing sustainable food, but ensure there are enough options available to meet particular dietary requirements. Purchasing local food helps support the local economy, especially in rural areas, and creates and protects employment. Local foods can provide an important added value outlet for the products of traditional farming systems that conserve landscape and biodiversity. The Fairtrade Foundation sets minimum sustainability standards for products, particularly foodstuffs, to extend this positive impact into some of the world's poorest communities

⁸ Food & Drink Federation – Progress Report 2008.





Fresh produce that is in season will generally mean less energy has been used in its production. Food miles, the distance from producer to end user, are also reduced thus minimising air pollution and carbon emissions associated with its transport. For smaller events, you will often be limited to using in-house catering. However, it's still worth reviewing the checklist below and asking questions to find out about your caterer's policies and see if you can encourage them to make changes.

Taking action on food packaging and ensuring it is a factor in purchasing decisions will greatly increase the sustainability of your catering. This will also have a positive impact on your costs. For example, using tap water rather than bottled water is a particular opportunity. Tap water in Britain costs on average 0.1p per litre, while the average cost of a litre of bottled water is 90p. For a conference with 100 attendees, each consuming 1 litre of water over the course of the event, this equates to a saving of £89. In addition, there will be no waste bottles to add to the estimated half a million tonnes of plastic bottles ending up in landfill sites in the UK each year.

8.1 Key considerations

A quick checklist of factors to consider when planning catering for your event includes:

- ✓ **carefully planning your food requirements to ensure waste is minimised;**
 - ✓ **using sustainably produced local and seasonal produce whenever possible;**
 - ✓ **considering Fairtrade products when a local option is not available;**
 - ✓ **considering what you are going to do with the waste that is produced (e.g. disposal by composting); and**
 - ✓ **sourcing items locally from as few suppliers as possible to reduce delivery miles.**
- Information that should be considered during your planning includes:
- ✓ **using produce that meets recognised assurance standards (e.g. Red Tractor, LEAF Marque);**
 - ✓ **using re-usable crockery, glassware, cutlery and tablecloths wherever possible;**
 - ✓ **using fish obtained from sustainably managed sources that are harvested in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or depletion of exploited stocks;**
 - ✓ **using mostly fresh, seasonal produce;**
 - ✓ **using fresh fruit as an alternative to prepared desserts;**
 - ✓ **using tap water instead of bottled water; and**
 - ✓ **using paper or wooden recyclables, or biodegradable plastics (cornstarch) if disposables are unavoidable.**
- Information that should be considered in your dealings with suppliers includes:
- ✓ **asking the chef/caterers where the food came from originally. Remember, this is not about where the food is ordered from, but where the food was grown and processed. Buying British produce or, even better, Scottish produce, in season is recommended. Scotland has a wide range of locally produced food. So, from a sustainability perspective, there are good reasons for supporting the local food sector and using produce sourced from the region where the event is being held;**
 - ✓ **using certified Fairtrade and organic products can help address issues including fair terms for farmers and workers in the developing world, pesticides, additives, animal welfare and sustainability;**
 - ✓ **minimising the use of individually packaged foods (e.g. milk provided in individual portion packages); and**
 - ✓ **identifying local community groups or waste contractors that are licensed to collect and compost or anaerobically digest the waste food that will arise from the event.**

8

Information that should be provided to people planning to attend your event includes:

- ✓ planning food requirements – such as vegetarian options – carefully to avoid unnecessary waste. Use the event registration information to aid planning;
- ✓ asking attendees to sign up for meals in advance to reduce wastage and ask if they plan to attend sessions in the morning, afternoon or both; and
- ✓ raising awareness of what attendees should do with the waste they produce so that recycling/composting options are maximised.

Further information on waste management and recycling is provided in Section 9.

8.2 Further information

Sources of information that may be useful in planning the catering for your sustainable event include:

- the **Zero Waste Scotland** website contains information about minimising food waste (www.zerowastescotland.org.uk);

- **Scotland Food & Drink** is an industry-led organisation that offers a product development service, marketing support, sales advice, consumer research, information on access to markets, a 'meet the buyer' programme, PR support and a free legal consultation (www.scottishfoodanddrink.com);
- the **Hate Waste Love Food** website has advice on reducing food waste (www.wasteawarelovefood.org.uk);
- the **EatScotland** website has information on Scotland's seasonal foods, ranging from vegetables and berries to fish and seafood (www.scottishfoodinseason.com);
- the **Fairtrade Foundation's** website contains information about Fairtrade products, producers and much more (www.fairtrade.org.uk);
- the **Healthy Living Award** scheme offers advice to caterers and clients on healthy eating options (www.healthylivingaward.co.uk); and
- the **Soil Association's** website has information on the benefits of using organic produce (www.soilassociation.org).

Case study

East Lothian Food and Drink Directory

East Lothian Council, working with the county's food and drink producers and retailers, has launched the East Lothian Food and Drink Directory www.foodanddrinkeastlothian.com. The Directory has been developed by the Council's Economic Development Division in partnership with the local business community as part of an ongoing strategy to promote the use of local produce in restaurants, hotels and among the general public.

The free Directory lists 58 producers and retailers specialising in a wide variety of produce including cakes, confectionery, dairy products, seafood and meat. It is a key part of a long-term strategy to promote the rich variety of superb local produce available in East Lothian.

Provost Sheena Richardson explained the thinking behind the Directory, 'East Lothian has a strong heritage of growers, producers and breeders who provide a range of top quality food and drink products. This industry is a really significant part of our local economy and plays an important supporting role in our tourism activities. Therefore, we felt it was essential to promote it to as wide an audience as possible.'

Reducing waste from your event



As an event manager, you have a legal 'Duty of Care' to ensure that your waste is correctly collected, stored and recycled or disposed of appropriately⁹.

Sustainable waste management represents one of the greatest environmental challenges facing the UK. The disposal of waste to landfill can result in the loss of valuable materials, the release of pollutants into the soil and watercourses, and the production of greenhouse gases, most notably methane, which has a global warming potential over 20 times that of carbon dioxide.

Over 20 million tonnes of waste is generated every year in Scotland¹⁰ and landfill space is rapidly running out. European Union legislation means Scotland has to find alternatives to disposing of valuable resources to landfill¹¹. Other benefits that arise from sustainable waste management are conservation of natural resources and energy savings. It also makes good business sense for the venue if the waste disposal costs associated with your event are minimised.

Reducing the waste or resources associated with your event is a key means of reducing overheads. Waste costs money, typically up to 4% of business turnover.

Domestic recycling rates are increasing and many attendees will expect similar facilities to be provided at business and leisure events. Offering such services is a visible means of demonstrating your sustainability credentials and will place your organisation in a positive light.

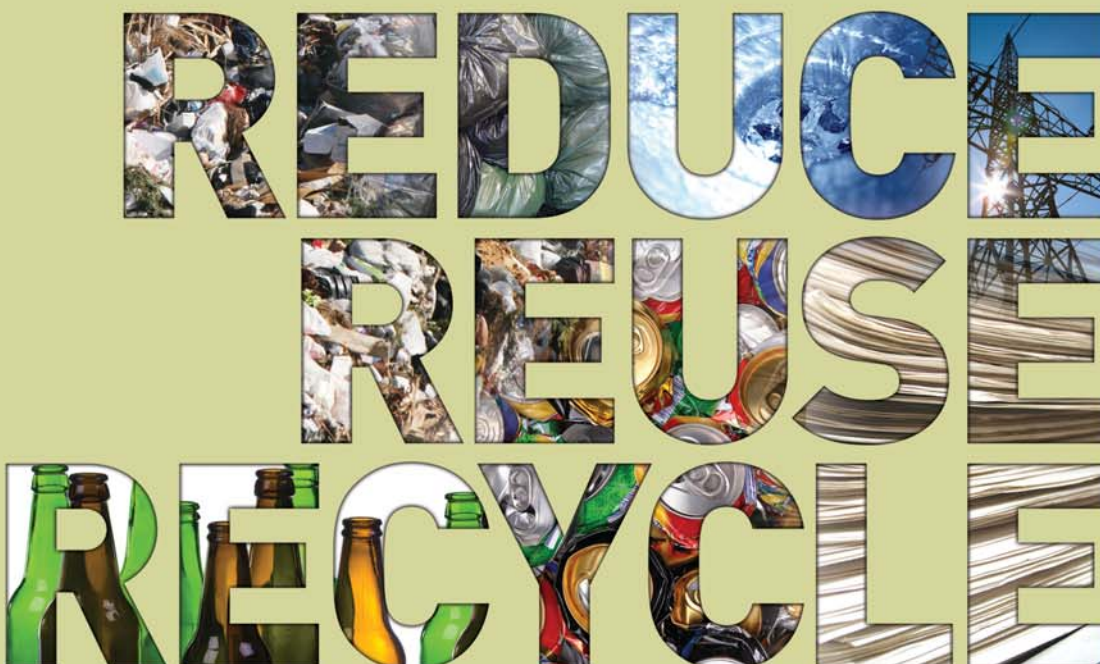
9.1 Key considerations

Managing the waste resulting from your event is not just about recycling; the best way of dealing with waste is not to create any in the first place. The waste mantra, REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE is essential guidance and a great start for planning how to deal with your waste.

⁹ Information on your legal obligations with respect to 'Duty of Care' can be found at www.sepa.org.uk/dutyofcare

¹⁰ SEPA Waste Digest

¹¹ EU Landfill Directive





9.2.1 Reduce

Reduce the amount of waste your event will produce by following this advice:

- Check if a similar event has been held previously as information on this will help you plan what wastes you will need to manage.
- Avoid excessive paper use by carrying out all marketing, correspondence and registration activity by e-mail, internet or through an electronic delegate management system.
- Use whiteboards rather than paper flipcharts.
- Try to limit handouts. If you do need to use them, try to ensure that you produce only the number of packs that are required.
- Instead of providing printed materials, think about handing out information on memory sticks as these can be reused.
- By providing attendee packs on arrival, and not prior to the event, duplication can be avoided.
- Consider a tick box on the conference registration or feedback form for the attendee to request a pack to be sent electronically.
- Check that the attendee pack contains only essential information and provide a checklist of extra materials that attendees can have emailed to them after the event.
- Format handouts to minimise the amount of paper required by reducing the margins in page setup, print double-sided and print more than one page per sheet (this applies particularly to presentation handouts).
- Collect business cards to create a mailing list and send information out electronically after the event.
- Only provide handouts on request – up to 60% of literature handed out at events is thrown away unread.

- Rather than purchase single-use items, hire as many of the materials and products needed for your event as possible. Note: if you deliver events regularly, then purchasing reusable materials and marketing collateral is more sustainable and will save money.
- Have a laptop and printer on site so that literature can be printed out on demand if attendees require hard copies.

9.2.2 Re-use

- If you are providing attendees with free gifts ensure they are useful, reusable and, where possible, made from sustainable materials.
- Use reusable, rather than event-specific, name badges, signs, display materials, exhibition stands, flooring, etc.
- Put the attendee pack in a reusable holder (e.g. a jute bag or durable recycled folder). Best of all, collect the holders in at the end of the event so they can be re-used.
- Communicate in advance with the venue staff to inform them of likely waste materials – a later event may be able to make use of them.

9.2.3 Recycle

- Ask for advice about recycling at your chosen venue. The Community Resources Network Scotland (CRNS) is a membership body for community organisations throughout Scotland. CRNS can provide a wide range of services that could support recycling at your event.
- Specify materials to be used by suppliers and stall holders, so they can be managed by your recycling system.
- Clearly label recycling bins, so they look different from standard bins. Also make sure bins are available for different types of waste and are positioned in convenient locations (e.g. by entrances/exits/toilets/food stalls). Advertise their presence.
- Ensure that all paper waste is collected and recycled.



- For larger, outdoor events, a 'recycle pick' can be organised alongside traditional post event clearance.
- For larger events, vendors may be persuaded to charge a levy for the return of cups, bottles or cans.
- Ensure recycling bins are checked regularly and emptied if required. If working with local community recycling organisations, the bins could be manned to ensure there is no contamination with non-recyclable wastes.
- For larger events, the relevant local authority or a private waste management company can provide recycling facilities. This could be provided in conjunction with local community recycling organisations offering a collection service.

9.2 Other factors you should consider

- ✓ Ensure presenters are aware of electronic presentation facilities and that their presentation will be distributed electronically after the event.
- ✓ Use recycled or Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper.
- ✓ Choose a sustainable printer. Details of these can be found on the Paper Print Environment website¹², endorsed by Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, which contains a list of ISO 14001 certified environmental printers by location.
- ✓ If reusable materials are not appropriate, use recycled and/or recyclable materials for packaging, paper, etc. You should consider making this an explicit contractual requirement.

¹² www.ppe.uk.net



Edinburgh International Conference Centre

Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) has a deep and enduring commitment to sustainability that has been embedded in the business since 1998, with an identifiable Sustainable Events Programme in place from 2002.

Sustainability is just another facet of the operation that is subject to a total quality management approach and the entire programme is underpinned by the global environmental management standard ISO 14001.

Working with its customers, EICC introduced the Plan-it Green™ programme in 2007 that is a route map to greener events, and raises the bar for carbon sequestration in the meetings and exhibitions industry. It gives event organisers the opportunity to support tree planting in Scotland, as a carbon sink, to offset event-specific emissions.

EICC was an early adopter of the advice and support available from bodies such as Zero Waste Scotland, and the conference centre Green Team advocates a constantly improving Reduce, Re-use and Recycle regime. Wastes are carefully collected, stored and recycled and cross contamination of valuable materials is avoided by using a separate 'Recycling Yard'.

EICC benchmarks itself against industry leaders and has become a benchmark itself for others in sustainable management. The centre is a winner of the Vision in Business for the Environment of Scotland (VIBES) Award and holds the Gold Award from VisitScotland's Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS).

9.3 Further information

- Zero Waste Scotland works with businesses and organisations to help them reduce waste, recycle more and use resources sustainably. For more advice contact the Zero Waste Scotland Helpline on 0808 100 2040 or visit the website (www.zerowastescotland.org.uk).
- Support and services available from the community sector can be obtained from the Community Resources Network Scotland (www.crns.org.uk).
- The National Association of Paper Merchants sets minimum standards for recycled products (www.napm.org.uk).
- Visit www.ppe.uk.net for information on printers with ISO 14001 accreditation and other sustainability awards.
- The Forest Stewardship Council provides advice on sustainable timber and paper products (www.fsc-uk.org).

Further sources of information



Zero Waste Scotland

works with businesses and organisations to help them reduce waste, recycle more and use resources sustainably. For more information, contact the WRAP Resource Efficiency helpline on **0808 100 2040** or visit the website (www.zerowastescotland.org.uk).

The Carbon Trust

provides specialist support to business and the public sector to help cut carbon emissions, save energy and commercialise low carbon technologies. (www.carbontrust.co.uk).

The Energy Saving Trust

provides a range of resources to help organisations reduce carbon dioxide emissions (www.energysavingtrust.org.uk).

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency

is Scotland's environmental regulator, and helps business and industry to understand their environmental responsibilities, and to comply with legislation and good practice (www.sepa.org.uk).

The Scottish Government

has as its overall purpose to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, through increasing sustainable economic growth (www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/environment/sustainabledevelopment).



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