

Sustainable Events GUIDE



**UNIVERSITY OF
GREENWICH**

*Sustainable
Development Unit*

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Event checklist

- Familiarise yourself with sustainability initiatives at Greenwich.
- Understand the importance of sustainable practices and align event plans with University's Net Zero plan.
- Seek recognised accreditations to support sustainability across your events.
- Encourage and promote environmentally friendly transportation options.
- Optimise and follow practical steps on how to reduce energy use.
- Source locally, seasonally to minimise food waste and environmental footprint.
- Minimise printing, opt for digital alternative, offer sustainable and useful giveaways and use recyclable and reusable event materials.
- Get inspired by reviewing case studies of sustainable event practices from universities across the UK.

Introduction

Events can be hugely beneficial for networking, exchange of knowledge and raising awareness of different issues, but it may also create negative environmental consequences if managed poorly. On average, events create 2.5 kilos of landfill-bound waste, per person, per day. As staff of the University of Greenwich, we should be aware of such consequences and aim to organise events that would help the university achieve highest sustainable standards by reducing negative impacts on the environment, economy and communities.

The decisions we make have an impact on the planet. By making sustainable decisions we can lessen our environmental impacts, such as reducing carbon footprint, waste and pollution. As people are increasingly concerned about the environment by putting on a more sustainable event your clients and attendees may value the action you take.

Events are a fantastic way to raise awareness about sustainability and foster positive change. This guide to hosting sustainable events explores some of the key ways in which event organisers can minimise their in-person event's carbon footprint and offer outstanding attendee experiences.

This document will provide you with information and advice to lessen the environmental impact of your next event.

Sustainability Team

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What do we do at Greenwich?

Event Planning & Management

Our team of professional Events Co-ordinators will happily assist in planning and executing your event in the most sustainable way across the campuses at University of Greenwich. This could include the use of sustainable travel options such as the river boat, seasonal menus choices and off-setting carbon emissions by tree planting.

Sustainable Menu Selection

Our chefs work hard to offer sustainable menu options including the use local suppliers, Fairtrade/organic options and products with lower carbon footprint and will work closely with events organisers to create bespoke menus suited to your event.

Minimising Waste

Predicting the ideal amount of food for an event is challenging – appetites vary and no one wants to under or over caterer! The events team will work with events organisers to review menu options in advance and consumption during the event to offer solutions to reduce waste.

Accreditations

Our Estates and Facilities Directorate (including our main catering provider) operate to ISO14001 (Environmental Management) international standards, with our institution maintaining its Fairtrade University Status Award.

What should event organisers do?

Environmental commitment

We would like to encourage all event planners to incorporate sustainable practices in order to help the environment, leave a positive impact on the economy, community and strengthen the brand of the University of Greenwich.

Here are few ideas of aims and pledges an event could make:

- We will provide hybrid event opportunities to tackle the issue of transport related emission.
- We will offset our event's impact through UK tree planting schemes.
- We aim to reduce our food waste by 50%.

To level up sustainable practices of your events, we would highly recommend to have a look at Sustainable event management **ISO 20121**. ISO 20121 covers necessary guidelines for sustainability related issues including waste management, water management, social responsibility and others. The overall aim of ISO 20121 is to reduce event's carbon footprint. Please have a look at the certification section to find out more.

Whether you are planning small-scale events such as networking events or large-scale events like conferences or Open Days, this guide will help you to add a good amount of sustainable features that your events should have.

Accreditations to look out for



**ISO 20121
Sustainable Events**

ISO 20121 offers guidance and best practice to help you manage your event and control its social, economic and environmental impact. Every action counts, from relying on tap water instead of plastic bottles to encouraging use of public transport. You might find that it also helps you cut unnecessary costs. See the following guiding brochure: (<https://www.iso.org/iso-20121-sustainable-events.html>).



**ISO 14001
Environmental
Management Systems**

International Organisation for Standardization is an independent, non-governmental international organisation. It will show your organisation how to minimise its environmental impact. In doing so, ISO 14001 can improve your efficiency, reduce operational costs and help you win new business. Source: <https://www.iso.org/files/live/sites/isoorg/files/store/en/PUB100372.pdf>)



**Good Business
Charter**

The Good Business Charter is a simple accreditation which organisations of all sizes in the UK can apply for in recognition of responsible business practices. Demonstrates a clear message to current and potential customers that your business is committed to operating responsibly and treating staff with respect and fairness. (Source): <https://goodbusinesscharter.com/>

Certified



Corporation

B Corp

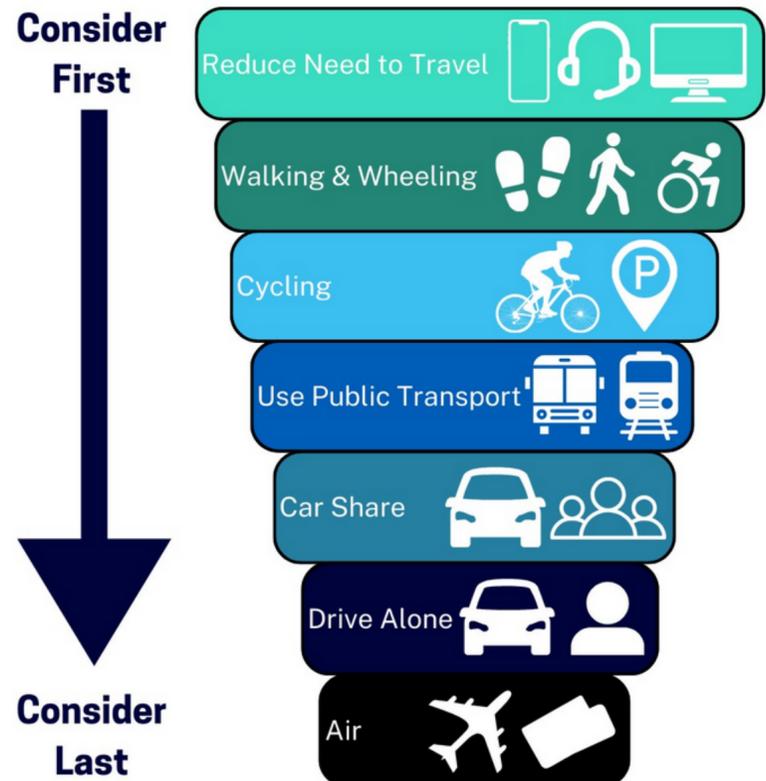
Certified B Corporations, or B Corps, are companies verified by B Lab to meet high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability. This certification is designed to help companies demonstrate that they care about the well-being of their customers, employees, and community. (Source: <https://bcorporation.uk/>)



Travel and Transport

Transport is on the major sources of carbon emission in UoG. Driving not only creates pollution, but also emits greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. When planning for travel we should always make reference to the Sustainable Travel Pyramid.

We are aware that many teams at the university, especially the events teams, are familiar with our fantastic university blue buses. Yet, there are many new people who might not be aware of that. Public transport links to all of the campuses specific directions can be found here <https://www.gre.ac.uk/about-us/travel>



- Choose a location with great public transport links and incentivise these options.
- Plan for a virtual/hybrid event if possible to assist in the reduction of attendee commuting miles.
- Check out the event literature to promote cycling, car sharing, and public transport.
- Record sessions and make them available after the event's closure to maximise reach in addition to ease of attendance.

TIP

For events in Greenwich, **Discover Greenwich** is useful for open days as it is designed to help enhance our virtual offering

Contact **IT Team** for live-streaming support.



Energy

Organizing events demands a high amount of energy. Whether it's maintaining a comfortable temperature, illuminating the venue, or ensuring the food stays adequately heated, the energy sector stands as the primary source of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions and a significant influencer on an event's overall environmental footprint. Although diminishing the energy usage of an event may seem challenging, there are practical steps accessible to any environmentally conscious event planning.

- Turn off computers, projectors and lights when not in use.
- Utilise spaces with natural light/ ventilation where possible.
- Conduct energy audits of event spaces to identify areas for improvement.

Climate change and finite energy resources have been identified as two of the biggest challenges facing the world today. Organisations are starting to take action; declaring climate emergencies and setting targets for becoming net zero or reducing their emissions. To tackle these issues, the university has for example, committed to achieving Net Zero. You should be able to search for environmental policies or commitments of the venue and organisation you are intending to use for your event.



Catering

Food has a large environmental footprint and it's something we should take seriously when organising an event. By replacing a meat based menu with a plant based menu the university can reduce the carbon footprint of a 500 person event by 10 tonnes of greenhouse gas, according to the Centre for Biological Diversity. Adapting some of the menu choices to vegan can further reduce the carbon footprint of your event.

Sourcing food

- Ask the suppliers for ethical information on the menu and identify if any ingredients are locally sourced (see above on what accreditations to look out for).
- Avoid ordering the foods that are not popular, adjust amount of food order next time.
- Reduce meat & dairy options and replace them with vegetarian/ vegan options. This not only lowers your event's carbon footprint, but also help account for religious and dietary requirements (see the diagram below for more information).

Reducing food waste

- Provide refillable water rather than bottles to avoid waste.
- Encourage attendees to bring Tupperware for leftovers.

Reducing disposable waste

- Provide reusable cutlery, plates and drinking glasses/cups as much as possible.
- In communications and invitations, literature should include why sustainable decisions have been made; i.e. why disposable cutlery has been avoided
- Review supplies following the event and whether there was any significant over-ordering of food that could be reduced in the future.

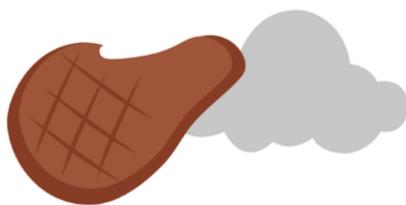
Below, you can see a diagram that captures how reducing meat options can reduce carbon emissions.

Being Sustainable with meat

What can one portion do?



75g of beef or a standard burger



1 less saves **8kg of CO2**
Or 18 car miles!

75g of lamb or 2 normal chops



1 less saves **4kg of CO2**
Or 34 showers!

75g of pork or 3 rashers of bacon



1 less saves **2kg of CO2**
Or 7 car miles!

75g of chicken or a single breast



1 less saves **1kg of CO2**
Or 5 showers!

75g of fish or a single fillet



1 less saves **2kg of CO2**
Or 7 car miles!

Every portion makes a difference.
What will you reduce?

MAKE YOUR CHANGE



Accreditations to look out for



Fairtrade

The Fairtrade Mark is a registered certification labeled for products sourced from producers in lower income countries. The mark is used only on products certified in accordance with Fairtrade Standards and on promotional materials to encourage people to buy Fairtrade products. Fairtrade is far more than a certification scheme. Behind the famous Fairtrade label is one of the largest and most diverse global movements for change. (Source: <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/>)



Rainforest Alliance

The Rainforest Alliance seal promotes collective action for people and nature. It amplifies and reinforces the beneficial impacts of responsible choices, from farms and forests all the way to the supermarket check-out. The seal allows you to recognize and choose products that contribute toward a better future for people and planet. (Source: <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/>)



Food For Life

At Food For Life, they believe everyone should have access to healthy and sustainable food that is good for the climate, nature, and health. Food for Life promotes positive dietary behaviour change, both in the short and long term (Source: <https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/>)



Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

RSPCA Assured is the RSPCA's farm animal welfare assurance scheme. All farms on the RSPCA Assured scheme must comply with the RSPCA's stringent higher welfare standards. These standards cover every aspect of the animals' lives from birth through to slaughter. You can find a link with more information about the standards below. When you see an RSPCA Assured label on a meat, fish or dairy product, it means that the hatchery, farm, haulier and abattoir were all assessed and confirmed to have met the RSPCA's higher farm animal welfare standards. (Source: <https://www.rspcaassured.org.uk/>)

Planning for Arrival

Once your event is planned, it is time for the final stage of sustainable events planning, the arrival. This is the opportunity to communicate your environmental considerations, stimulate a deeper discussion with your attendees and look back towards your commitment and targets.

Printing

- Send emails and electronic initiations to avoid paper use.
- Digital check-in for guests, alternatively, A2 cards of schedules can be on display at reception, which includes a QR code for guests to scan on their way in and carry with them digitally throughout the event.
- Do not put dates on any directional signage so they can be used for future events.
- Send QR codes or emails for any end of event feedback you wish to asquire.

Freebies

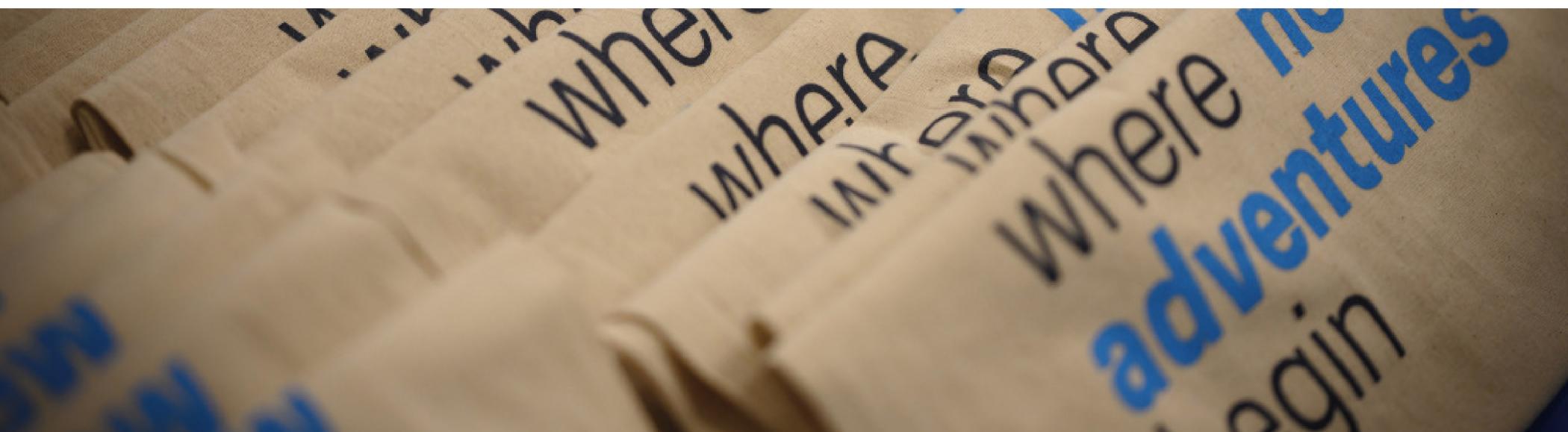
- Avoid 'freebies' whenever possible and if they are to be given, go for items that may be useful for everyday life.
- Order freebies and gifts only from suppliers that have a contract with the university
- Make sure that your freebies make impact, leave a positive brand image, stand out from the competition - try offering plantable gifts (seeds), or reusable cutlery set, handkerchief/towels, collapsible containers/cups; or simply let them take what they like from these freebies that you have currently in stock

Materials

- Set up a name badge collection basket near the exit to reclaim and reuse.
- If you are aiming for any staff clothing, check to see if they are made from organic materials (or reuse the old or avoid altogether).
- Ensure there are no single-use disposable materials being used.
- Make sure any pop-up banners or visuals are generalised, without the inclusion of dates so that they can be used for future events.

TIP

Contact the events team to discuss how we can further reduce unnecessary waste





University Case Studies

We would like to provide you with a little overview of what might be useful to consider on the following example of real happenings in the world.

University of Birmingham

The Conferences and Events team at the University of Birmingham has achieved a Bronze and Silver accreditation called a Bronze and Silver accreditation called **Green Impact SOS**. Green Impact is a United Nations award-winning programme designed to support environmentally and socially sustainable practice. By taking part in the Green Impact Challenge, the team has saved 130 tonnes of carbon emissions on campus.

Apart from emphasising the importance of saving water or energy, the events team initiated a paperless operations system by making abstract submissions online and avoiding the need of paper print outs.

Events at the University of Queensland

The university first developed their sustainable guide in 2019 and it has been enthusiastically adopted throughout the University since, with more than 600 downloads by event organisers. They focussed on driving positive and practical change among students, staff, suppliers and the local community. For inspiration their guide is available here: <https://sustainability.uq.edu.au/files/7826/SustEventsGde.pdf>



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Make your change

**We all have the power to make a positive difference,
no matter how small the action.**

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