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# Green Events

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A guide for business and leisure events



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# Preface

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This overview of green events introduces top tips and best practices to help organisations run events of all kinds in as environmentally sustainable a way as possible.

The Carbon Trust provides simple, effective advice to help organisations take action to reduce carbon emissions.

Implementing sustainable practices can reduce your costs, improve your brand reputation, increase attendee engagement, and help everyone in the fight against the climate crisis. Events are also a great opportunity to bring people together to inspire change and innovation.

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# Introduction

Events can be particularly carbon and waste intensive, but can also be great places for collaboration and innovation, with significant opportunities for positive environmental impacts.

There are over 25,000 UK businesses in the events industry, and over half a million employed in the sector. With events directly contributing £39 billion to the UK economy<sup>1</sup> (and a global value of £840 billion<sup>2</sup>), there is a huge scope for substantial improvements to be made.

This guide will cover practical steps to tackle areas of environmental impact in the events industry, including venue selection, energy, waste, food, transport and biodiversity.

We encourage businesses to make their events part of their wider sustainability programme. Start by developing a sustainability policy for your business which covers green procurement and considers sustainability issues in making contracting and buying decisions. Set improvement objectives and goals with defined timeframes and performance targets. Understand what data needs to be collected on a regular basis in order to measure and monitor your progress against these targets. Engage with suppliers and partners to ensure that they support your policy aims and provide relevant information on their activities and impacts. This guide aims to support your organisation's continuous sustainability improvement programme. For further information, see our [energy management guides](#).

This guide is designed for use by anyone working in the events industry (especially in smaller organisations) and anyone looking at the environmental impact of the events, meetings, festivals and exhibitions they run. In the first instance, event organisers should also question whether their event needs to be held in person, or whether can it be carried out virtually (or offer virtual participation for delegates).

This guide can be used on its own or as an introduction to the many sector and technology specific publications in the Carbon Trust's library. Publications can be downloaded from [www.carbontrust.com/resources](http://www.carbontrust.com/resources).

Selected case study examples have been included for illustrative purposes only and there are many other businesses offering sustainable venues and events services.



<sup>1</sup> Events are GREAT, 2014

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cwt-meetings-events.com/futuretrends>

# Powering your venue

Energy consumed in the heating, cooling and lighting of the venue represents a significant contribution to an event's overall carbon footprint<sup>3</sup>.

When identifying potential venues for your event, it is important to consider the energy efficiency of the building itself. Also consider transportation to and from the event location. Preference should be given to choosing a low carbon, energy efficient building which is conveniently located and accessible by public transport. Well managed buildings should feature LED lighting, an energy efficient design and low carbon heating with energy monitoring systems.

When choosing outdoor venues for events such as festivals and concerts, consider whether you can meet localised energy demand through renewable energy generation. For example, some festivals manage to run on 100% renewable energy by reducing demand where possible, specifying energy efficient equipment, using waste vegetable oil derived fuel for generators, and using power generated on-site by solar PV panels. Engage with your event production and audio-visual team about the energy which will be used by screens, lighting and speakers. Consider installing temporary solar panels and generators to meet this energy demand.

For events taking place at your own premises, consider switching your energy supply contract to a green or 100% renewable tariff. See the Carbon Trust publication on [Energy Procurement and Green Tariffs](#) for further information.



**The Crystal in London, an example of a sustainable event venue.**

<sup>3</sup> European Commission Guide on Sustainable Meetings and Events, 2018

## A Crystal clear vision for the future

### The Crystal

The Crystal in London is hailed as one of the world's most sustainable buildings. The building gets 100% of its energy from electricity with around 20% of this energy coming from the rooftop solar photovoltaic panels. Most of the building's heating and cooling is supplied by ground source heat pumps. Additionally, the building has a sophisticated energy management system which controls, measures and monitors the Crystal's energy usage. The building's performance is compared to the performance of other buildings across the world, ensuring their systems remain as efficient as possible.



## THG Events Limited – Energy Saving Opportunity Assessment

THG Events Limited provide event structure services for a wide range of events. Following an energy assessment to help identify areas for energy savings and to be able to carry out more sustainable events in future, they discovered potential annual energy spend reductions of around 15% of their total energy consumption through two projects. Firstly, energy reductions were identified by proactively managing energy as a controllable resource. This included engaging employees with an energy policy, implementing procedures for start-up/shut down of equipment, and measuring, analysing and reporting their energy use. This project would have an instant payback period and carry the potential to save £1100 over 5 years. Secondly, THG Events Limited were advised to replacing existing old lighting systems which have no automatic controls with an LED-based solution. This was expected to reduce annual lighting costs by over 65%, with a 4 year payback period and expected savings of £10,290 over the next 10 years. Since the assessment was carried out, motion controlled light sensors have been installed, as well as new LED lighting installed throughout their office and workshop.

# Waste

There are many ways excessive waste can be avoided at your event

It is a good idea to start by reviewing your current and/or expected waste streams and recycling practices, and having discussions with your suppliers, contractors, staff, and attendees.

Food waste is addressed in the next section. Here are some considerations to explore both internally and with your suppliers, along with potential solutions:

Waste source	Solution
Ticketing	Consider using e-ticketing solutions <sup>4</sup> . This not only cuts down on paper waste but also on the ink and energy required for printing.
Marketing collateral	Consider the entire lifecycle of any promotional materials. Use technology such as event apps or web pages to disseminate information (such as agendas and participants lists) rather than having paper print outs. Also consider the impact and sourcing of any giveaways offered, as well as your venue decoration and any flowers.
Foodservice packaging	Speak to your food suppliers about the packaging they'll be using for food. In particular, consider compostable or plant-based materials for takeaway food options, and encourage attendees to bring their own lunch containers. Alternatively, use reusable crockery and cutlery for food.
Water	Provide drinking water in jugs rather than plastic bottles. Make water fountains or refill points available and encourage attendees before the day to bring their own water bottles to refill during the event.
Drinks	If hot or cold beverages will be served at the event, opt for reusable drinks containers. For example, many festivals have started to run deposit schemes where attendees pay an additional small amount as a deposit on the drinks container. You can also offer discounts for attendees who bring their own cups. Such schemes can ultimately result in cost savings, eliminating the need for repeat purchasing of single-use cups, and reducing clean-up, waste management and collection costs.
Recycling and composting	Ensure there are easily accessible waste and recycling points available throughout your event venue with clear labels highlighting what can and cannot be recycled. If it is possible for your site, collecting food waste for composting is a great way to reduce waste ending up in landfill.
Post event clean-up	Establish dedicated roles within your team for post event clean-up. This is particularly important for outdoor events such as festivals and music concerts where there can be a large direct environmental impact. Encourage attendees to clean up after themselves and use well labelled waste and recycling points. The easier you make this for attendees the better your outcome will be.

<sup>4</sup>EventBrite – Guide to a Greener Festival 2018

# Food

The cooking, source, production, transport, and waste of food at your event will be an important part of your overall environmental impact.

Talk to your catering team or external food suppliers about the steps they are taking to source local and sustainable food, provide a variety of food options including vegetarian and vegan, and reduce food waste. When contracting with a food supplier, your contracts should include a section on their environmental commitments.

Around a third of all food produced globally is wasted. To minimise food wastage at your event, plan your catering carefully in advance. Buffets can be particularly wasteful with some options inevitably ending up more popular than others. Instead, produce a menu and ask your attendees for their food preferences ahead of the event, and obtain as accurate as possible a guest count as soon as possible. Consider likely drop out numbers and factor this into your planning. Also, try to team up with local food banks and projects in the local community for any unavoidable food waste. For further information, see the Carbon Trust's [Hospitality guide](#) and [Food preparation and catering guide](#).

## Food for thought

### Eden – Caterers and Food Procurement

Eden Caterers has a Food Procurement Policy which includes a commitment to purchasing food with the lowest carbon footprint possible. For example, in most cases, their food undergoes only one cooking cycle to increase efficiency and reduce the energy needed for cooking. They also focus on seasonal, local food, and avoid food associated with unsustainable palm oil. The environmental impact of the meat and dairy industry is also carefully considered, and vegetarian and vegan options make up over 70% of their menus.





# Transport

When planning your event, choose venues which are well served by easily accessible public transport links.

If your event is situated away from cities and towns, or further afield, you should explore how you can support attendees to arrive together, for example by providing shuttle busses to run between local train stations or airports and the venue. For larger events, implementing a car-pool scheme can be a good way to help attendees share the costs of getting to and from the venue. Additionally, you can encourage cyclists by ensuring there are easily accessible and safe places to leave bicycles.

Attendees should be given clear instructions on how to travel to your event, with public transport options highlighted above driving.

## Electric Vehicles

The use of electric vehicles is rapidly increasing globally. If possible, ensure your venue has charging points for visitors. If you are partnering with a travel company, ask them whether they can use electric vehicles in their fleet (for example electric taxis or buses). For your own vehicles and those of your staff, consider transitioning your fleet to electric or offering your staff an electric vehicle for use as a company car or pool car for commuting and travelling to events.

It is also worth exploring the government's workplace charging scheme<sup>5</sup> which offers grant funding of up to 75% of the cost of a single workplace charging station, as well as other government schemes including grants towards the purchase of new electric or hybrid vehicles. You can also benefit from tax and congestion charge exemptions. For further information see the Carbon Trust's [Electric and Smart Vehicles guide](#).

## The Championships, Wimbledon – AELTC

The AELTC (All England Lawn Tennis Club) is proud to be a signatory to the UN Sport for Climate Action Framework which aims to achieve a clear trajectory for the global sports community to combat climate change in line with the Paris Agreement. The AELTC and The Championships recognise that they have a meaningful role to play, and undertook a full review of their business practices. They will be announcing their environmental sustainability strategy in early 2020, detailing their ambition to have a positive environmental impact.

For the last two years, Jaguar, the Official Car of The Championships, has supplied 10 electric vehicles in the courtesy car fleet. The AELTC are aiming to increase that number and are currently in the process of adding more charging points.



<sup>5</sup>UK Government: Workplace Charging Scheme

## Working with suppliers

As well as changing and improving your own practices, you can make a broader impact by working with your suppliers to ensure best environmental practice throughout the supply chain.

As well as changing and improving your own practices, you can make a broader impact by working with your suppliers to ensure best environmental practice throughout the supply chain. When deciding on new suppliers or contracts, make sure you include environmental considerations as part of the decision-making process. This can be made easier by implementing a sustainable procurement policy and setting out minimum requirements for your suppliers to meet as a criteria for working with them. You should also consider the entire lifecycle of the products in your supply chain. The inclusion of standard practices in contracts or terms of reference helps raise environmental awareness with your suppliers and leads to more environmentally conscious events. You should also think critically about any “green claims” being made by your suppliers and event sponsors, and be wary of greenwash. Check if they have any independent verification for claims about their carbon emissions or waste practices for example. Look out for the Carbon Trust label on products – this label offers third party assurance of carbon measurement, reduction and neutrality claims.

### Blackout Ltd

Blackout Ltd have grown to become the theatre and event industry’s largest supplier of theatrical drapes, theatrical rigging and other related products. Their services range from dry-hiring of equipment to full installations and bespoke pieces, employing 65 full time staff. Blackout Ltd came to the Carbon Trust Green Business Fund looking for help to replace the lighting in their two warehouses which operate for around 50 hrs a week throughout the year. The new LED lighting fittings are expected to deliver savings of just over £9,000 per year.

“With support from the Green Business Fund we were able to upgrade from a rudimentary replacement program to a state of the art PIR controlled LED lighting installation.” Martin Wood, Blackout Ltd



# Carbon neutral events

Event managers are increasingly setting environmental targets and commitments to run carbon neutral events.

For an event to be considered “carbon neutral,” the balance of any carbon emissions caused that cannot be eliminated must have been offset against a measured carbon footprint. Committing to carbon neutrality includes:

- Measuring carbon emissions
- Reducing these as much as possible
- Offsetting any remaining, unavoidable emissions. Offsets should be obtained through reputable sources which have been independently verified or accredited, such as the Gold Standard.

You may wish for your event to be independently accredited as Carbon Neutral. Benefits of the Carbon Neutral Certification include enhanced brand reputation, credible communication of environmental responsibility, and increased attendee engagement and loyalty through being associated with an internationally recognised standard.

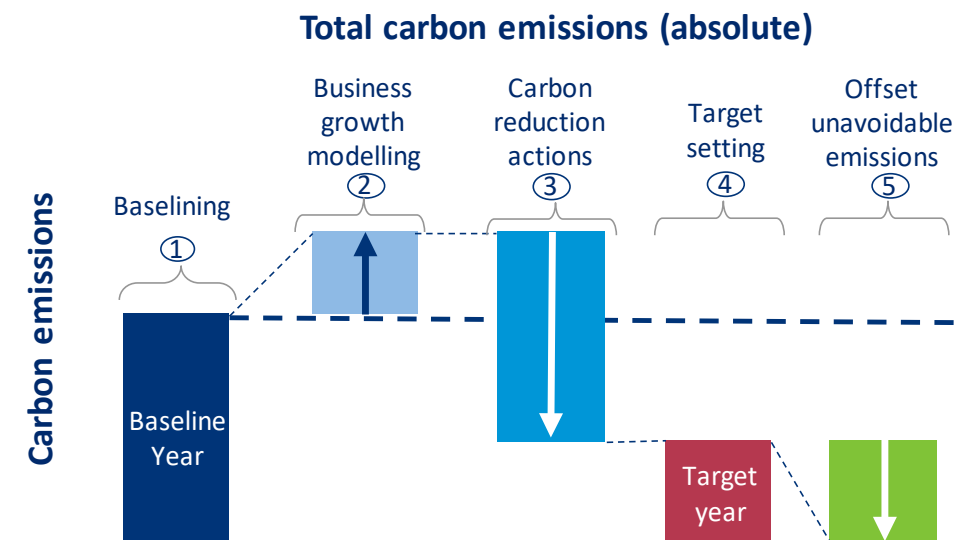


## Driving the clean energy revolution

### Formula E Sports Events Case Study: Envision Virgin Racing – Commitment to Carbon Neutrality

The FIA Formula E Championship is the world's first fully-electric racing series and promotes the transition to electric vehicles. As a leading racing team, Envision Virgin Racing were keen to calculate their baseline operational footprint, develop a carbon reduction plan in order to reduce their footprint as much as possible and then offset any remaining emissions. To achieve neutrality a time bound carbon reduction plan was developed which included embarking on a supplier engagement programme, exploring setting science-based targets at the group level and communicating their ambition for carbon neutrality through marketing and communications.

The remaining footprint emissions that could not be reduced were then compensated for through the purchase of good quality offsets to reach carbon neutrality. The graph below shows how carbon reduction and carbon neutral targets can be set from a baseline year.



# Biodiversity

Event planners should consider the local environment, biodiversity, and nature preservation impacts of their events, as well as taking into account any potentially harmful longer term impacts (post event).

Even events in big cities like London can be closer to nature than you might think, as The LookOut venue case study below illustrates.

## On the LookOut for sustainable event venues?

### The LookOut – Hyde Park venue

The LookOut in Hyde Park has considered the environmental and biodiversity impact of their venue. Features include a self-seeding brown roof that keeps the building cool in the summer and warm in the winter, walls insulated with recycled shredded newspaper and 36 solar panels to generate energy. The venue is situated within enclosed gardens with flower borders to encourage pollinators such as bees and butterflies, and meadow areas with native grassland species. There is on-site composting which processes most garden green waste, a wormery for kitchen waste which is used to create a natural fertiliser for the garden, and a wildlife pond which is rich in animal and plant life, including newts, pond snails and toads, as well as being a source of water for birds including jays, robins and great tits.

The LookOut is also the home of the Royal Parks learning programme connecting thousands of people of all ages to the natural world every year. All proceeds from hiring The LookOut go towards charitable objectives in the areas of conservation, education, well-being and heritage.



# Your next steps

Follow the steps below to ensure your next event has as positive an environmental impact as possible.

## Step 1: Understand your environmental impact

Look at your most recent past events and consider the main areas of negative environmental impacts. If you have measured any parameters in the past (such as waste and energy) use these as your baseline to improve upon.

## Step 2: Identify your opportunities

While planning your upcoming event, compile an event checklist. Walk around the venue beforehand and identify areas of energy consumption, as well as the other sections highlighted in this guide, to spot which environmental improvements you can make.

## Step 3: Prioritise your actions

Draw up an action plan with a schedule of improvements that need to be made and policies that need implementing, along with who from your team will be responsible for them.

## Step 4: Seek specialist help

It may be possible to implement environmental best practice yourselves, but you may wish to have further support, or be interested in certifying to the international standard ISO 20121 – Event Sustainability Management System.

## Step 5: Make changes and measure improvements

Implement the environmental improvements you identified for your next event and compare your impact to any previous events you hosted. After the event, evaluate how successful your efforts were and what areas will need more of a focus in future.

## Step 6: Plan for future events

Enforce your sustainability policies and procedures to ensure your events keep improving and becoming as green as possible in the future. Communicate your green event successes internally and externally to increase engagement with your environmental practices, and encourage your employees to participate in generating new ideas for future events.

# Checklist

Action	Completed
Have you set environmental targets for energy and waste?	
Have you committed to carbon neutrality?	
Have you chosen a venue, taking into consideration the energy efficiency and location of the building?	
Have you explored renewable energy for your venue?	
Have you addressed the waste sources identified in the section on waste? (Page 7)	
Have you considered the food options which will be on offer, and taken steps to limit meat and dairy provided?	
Is it possible to incorporate electric vehicles into the running of your event?	
Are you working with your suppliers to ensure best environmental practice throughout the supply chain?	
Have you considered the local environment, biodiversity, and nature preservation impacts of your event?	

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## Go online for more information

The Carbon Trust provides a range of tools, services and information to help you implement energy and carbon saving measures, no matter what your level of experience.

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**Website** – Visit us at [www.carbontrust.com](http://www.carbontrust.com) for our full range of advice and services.

➤ [www.carbontrust.com](http://www.carbontrust.com)

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**Events and workshops** – We offer a variety of events, workshops and webinars ranging from a high level introductions to our services through, to technical energy efficiency training.

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**Our client case studies** – Our case studies show that it's often easier and less expensive than you might think to bring about real change.

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The Carbon Trust is an independent company with a mission to accelerate the move to a sustainable, low-carbon economy. The Carbon Trust:

- advises businesses, governments and the public sector on opportunities in a sustainable, low-carbon world;
- measures and certifies the environmental footprint of organisations, products and services;
- helps develop and deploy low-carbon technologies and solutions, from energy efficiency to renewable power

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