



UNIVERSITY OF  
LIVERPOOL



# SUSTAINABLE EVENTS GUIDE

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# INTRODUCTION

## Sustainability at University of Liverpool

At the University of Liverpool, we have pledged to build sustainability into everything we do. This includes a commitment through our [University Strategy, Sustainability Strategy](#) and [Environmental Policy](#) to integrate sustainability across all our operations, including the numerous business, educational and social events we hold each year.

This guidance offers advice on how to incorporate sustainability into the planning, management, and evaluation of events, enabling organisers to contribute to the University's targets to:

- Achieve Net Zero by 2035
- Reduce waste (sent to landfill or incineration) by 50% by 2025

As well as helping the University achieve our sustainability targets, organising events in a sustainable way is important for our reputation as students, staff, external partners, and the public look to us to role-model sustainable and responsible behaviours.

## About this guide

**Why create a sustainable events guide?** Events are a great way to showcase work, connect with stakeholders and share new ideas and learning, however, events can have a big impact on the environment. Embedding sustainable principles into all aspects of the event provides the perfect opportunity for change and raises awareness of the organisation's sustainability ambitions.

**Who is it for?** This guide is for any University of Liverpool staff responsible for organising an event on any of our campuses or off-site, though it may also be useful to students and societies.

**How to use this Guide?** Consider how much time you have.

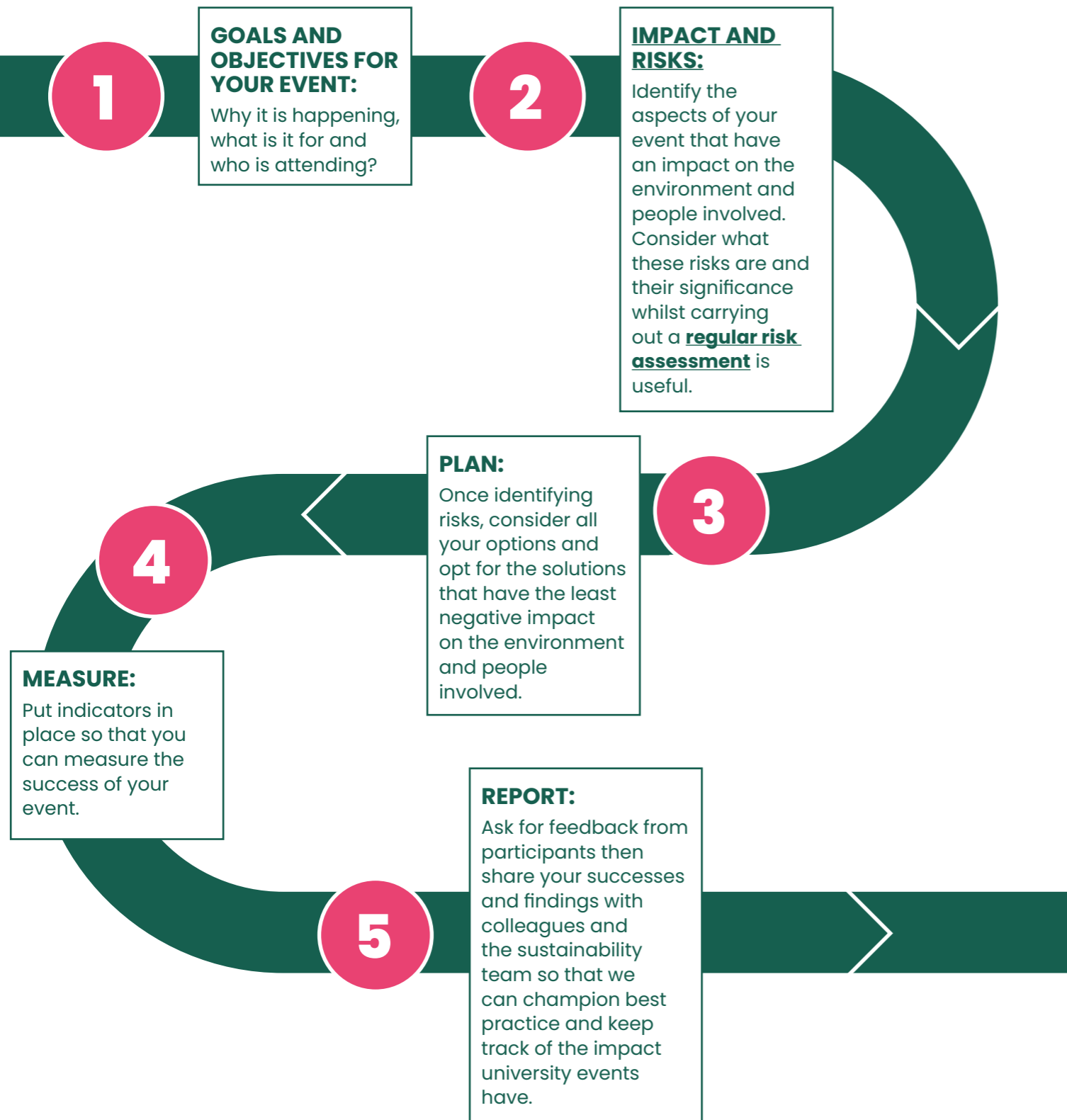
- a) Lots of time! Integrate sustainability from the start of the planning process using this guide.
- b) I'm quite busy! Use the sustainable events [checklist](#) and [resources](#) for a quick way to check whether your event is sustainable.

In addition, the University's [Conferences and Events](#) team can support you with the planning of events, from organising the venue, to ordering catering, and coordinating stakeholder engagement.



# PLANNING AN EVENT SUSTAINABLY

Things to consider when planning an event sustainably



# THE VENUE

A key part of any event is using the right venue, and luckily, there are plenty of options available both within the University and further afield. View the [University's range of venues](#) or [book a room](#). Your choice of venue can have a significant impact on the event's sustainability performance, so considering your options can make a big difference.

## Things to consider

- Venue facilities
- Audience and requirements
- Equipment and appliances
- Heat and power
- Waste management
- Accessibility

## Top tip!

Your choice of venue not only has an impact on the environment, but it also impacts people. At the University of Liverpool, we strive to create an **inclusive and welcoming environment** for staff, students, external partners, and the public. Find out more about what we do [here](#).

Some things to consider:

- **Communicate:** Ask attendees before the event whether they require any adjustments for the event. This gives people the opportunity to let you know if they need additional support or facilities.
- **Lighting and temperature:** At the start of the event, check in with the group by asking if people are happy with the lighting and temperature in the room. This may be easier to do with smaller events. If lighting and temperature is not adjustable in your room, consider booking a separate room where you can change it, to give people a break from harsh lighting and temperatures.
- **Sound:** At the start of the event, make attendees aware if there may be loud noises and flashing images. This may be good to do prior to the event so that guests can get in touch if they require further information.
- **Wellbeing breaks:** Schedule wellbeing/comfort breaks throughout your event, particularly for events that go on for more than an hour.
- **Additional spaces:** Provide additional spaces for prayer, breastfeeding, and quiet zones, particularly for longer events and conferences. Due to lack of space, these things will be taken into consideration depending on demand, and therefore, it is recommended that event organisers ask guests prior to the event if they will require these facilities.
- **Hearing loop system:** A hearing loop system broadcasts the audio from the event to people that using hearing aids. The University has a list of rooms that have hearing loops [here](#). For larger events, might consider organising for a certified sign language interpreter attend your event and translate for people who are hard of hearing.
- **Fire safety:** In the event of a fire, ensure the venue has a fully functioning refuse point and evacuation chair available for wheelchair users.



## What impacts could your venue choice have on the environment?

Whether it is the carbon footprint from heating, lighting, electricity and travel, or waste from catering and merchandise, considering how your venue choice could impact the environment will help you to consider better options.

### Review your options

**Online events:** Think about whether your event will really benefit from taking place in person and whether the event needs a venue at all. If you can negate the need for a venue, you also negate the need for heating, lighting, electricity, travel and catering.

**Outdoor events:** Hosting an event during the daytime can be a great opportunity to make the most of natural light, reducing the energy demand from lighting, and making the most of green spaces. The university and its suppliers have temporary structures, such as gazebos and teepees, for outdoor events. If using temporary structures, don't forget to consider whether heating would be required, as a portable heating system is unlikely to offer the efficiency of those available in buildings.

**Indoor events (on campus):** Think about how many people will be attending, the types of activities present, and the type and size of space required to accommodate them. The University has buildings which are certified to **BREEAM excellent** standard. These properties are estimated to produce 32% less carbon emissions than the average building.

#### Top Tip!

Make use of the University's list of **approved suppliers** for temporary structures

**Indoor events (off campus):** consider a venue which has achieved certification with green building standard such as; **BREEAM, WELL, Passivhaus** or more general certifications for their operations, such as **ISO 14001**.

#### Top Tip!

**Booking** an appropriately sized room will help avoid heating a large room unnecessarily.

### Communicate

Highlighting the sustainable credentials of a venue recognises the efforts of the organisation to achieve its sustainability ambitions, as well as encouraging stakeholders to consider their own impact.

### Data and feedback

Asking for feedback on the sustainability of an event, and specifically the venue, will identify areas of best practice and areas of improvement.

#### Example

### The Spine

The Spine has been host to many University conferences, meetings and evening events. With a range of spaces to choose from, it's a great option for an alternative venue to university buildings.

When the Spine was being built, sustainability was considered throughout all aspects of the process. The Spine's sustainability features include:

- Smart building management system to regulate temperature and lighting. The system responds to external lighting conditions and saves energy by automatically turning lights off when rooms are not being used.
- Optimisation of space layout to ensure maximum exposure to natural light.
- Use of LED lighting, saving 50% of energy costs compared to traditional lighting.
- Filtered drinking water accessible within the entire building.
- BREEAM Excellent standard.
- Sustainable Catering by the Spine's caterers CH&Co.

#### Example

### Centre for Sustainable Business launch event

The Centre for Sustainable Business launch event took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022. The event, focusing on the theme 'Reimagining Business', was hosted to launch the Centre for Sustainable Business and to connect the University to businesses, policy makers and consumer organisations to better understand the challenges that are faced when working towards a sustainability.

Organisers of the event ensured that the venue had sustainable credentials by opting for the BREEAM accredited Central Teaching Hub (CTH). The CTH is also DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant and gets lots of natural light during the daytime.

The event was hybrid and was therefore available online via zoom so that people could attend remotely.



# TRAVEL

Transportation accounts for 34% of UK greenhouse gas emissions, so one of the best ways to reduce the carbon emissions from your event is to pick a venue which is easily accessible via public or active travel. It is also important to consider whether the venue has safe and secure cycle storage to encourage your guests to travel sustainably.

### Things to consider with travel

- Audience and requirements
- Access to public transport
- Safety when traveling
- **Active travel facilities**
- Distance required to travel
- Timing of the event

#### Definition

#### Active travel:

**Active travel** refers to travel modes that rely upon a level of activity. This might include walking, cycling, scootering and more.

#### Example

### Can hybrid academic events really be as good as 'real life' events?

The HSS Sustainability Working group secured funding to run a pilot project that aimed to identify whether hybrid academic events could be as valuable as in-person events. The pilot considered the benefits of hybrid events, including financial, environmental, resource and user experience.

The research found that hybrid delivery of events increased overall registration numbers. Experiences were rated highly with 98% of all attendees saying they would attend a hybrid event again.

Six events were included in the project. The event, *From Nile to the Mersey: Studying the Rosetta Stone in Liverpool*, was the most well attended with 162 in-person attendees and 187 online attendees. By running the event as a hybrid event, hosts were able to invite people from further afield, including attendees and guest speakers with an international profile. This added to the success of the event, attracting more people to attend. Ultimately, the hybrid style made the event more inclusive, giving staff and partners the chance to experience a high-quality event that ordinarily, they may not be able to attend.

There are some additional things to consider to maximise the success of a hybrid event:

- When planning your hybrid event, consider the format of the event, so that you might use the correct equipment for the online aspect of the event. If your hybrid event is free to attend and only requires basic AV support, you can contact the University AV team via [this form](#) to discuss whether they can provide the AV support needed. Alternatively, for larger events, and those that you are charging people to attend, or events that require more a more technical solution, an external events company may be more suitable. The AV team will advise if this is the case.
- Factor in additional time (up to 3 hours before the event), cost and additional staff help that may be required for the use of equipment needed for the online aspect of the event, as well as a staff member to host the online platform.
- Reach out to other departments and faculties to find out if they own the equipment you need rather than buying or renting equipment from an external company.
- Consider all eventualities and plan for any technical issues to ensure the event runs as smoothly as possible.

## What impacts could transport choice have on the environment?

Factors such as distance, cost, facilities and knowledge of the location all contribute to the method of transport used by attendees. It is important to know how people are getting to and from the venue so that you know what the impact will be on the environment. If attendees all travel by car, this will contribute significantly to air pollution and will increase the carbon footprint of the event.

## Review your options

**Active travel:** Walking, cycling or scootering is the best option for the environment and public health. If your venue is of a suitable distance and has safe and secure facilities, active travel is a cheap way for your attendees to get to and from the event venue.

### Top Tip!

Reach out to our partners **Peloton Co-op** to find out if you can offer bike hire to event attendees for the duration of the event or conference.

**Public transport:** Whether it is a train, a bus, tram or the metro, public transport can be a hassle-free transport option, especially for events in well connected areas, like the city.

**Shared transport:** Implementing a car-pool scheme or organising a shuttle bus between the venue and a train or bus station can be great for larger events, preventing too many people from driving unnecessarily.

## Communicate

When advertising the event, encourage the use of active and public transport by providing **information** about cycling facilities and transport routes. You might consider actively discouraging the use of individual cars by providing alternatives such as a carpool scheme or shuttle bus between the venue and train station or hotels as an alternative.

### Top Tip!

Scheduling events during times when staff and students are more likely to be on campus could negate the need for additional travel required for the event. If the event is on during a time and day that staff and students are already on campus, you are likely to get higher attendance and lower the need to travel.

## Data and feedback

It is important for us to have data on carbon emissions associated with event travel so that we can report effectively and transparently, achieving our net zero goal. Asking attendees how far they will travel, and which mode of transport they opt for, is a straightforward way of gathering travel data. You could do this by including a survey within the invitation to the event.

*For example: Tick which mode(s) of transport you will use for the event: Walk, bicycle, train, car, bus.*

*Please provide an estimate of how many miles you will travel to the event.*

### Top Tip!

The University of Liverpool offers a **Cycle to Work scheme** and **public transport passes** at a discount for staff.

The type of transport and distance travelled is the data we need. By asking these questions, we normalise the process of understanding travel behaviour and work towards cultural change and a common understanding of the importance of carbon emissions associated with travel.



### Example

#### Guild Awards

Liverpool Guild of Students host an annual awards ceremony to celebrate the activities, events, and efforts of University of Liverpool Students.

To understand stakeholder travel behaviours, and work out carbon footprint from travelling to and from the event, the Guild asked attendees for basic details on their travel. They used the following wording to request activity data and explain why it was required:

*We are capturing information about how people plan to travel to Guild Awards to help us assess the carbon footprint of this event, in line with the Guild's Sustainability Policy and our Green Impact Accreditation.*

*How will you travel to Guild Awards? Please tick more than one box if you plan to use different modes of transport.*

- a) Walk
- b) Cycle
- c) Rail
- d) Bus
- e) Car

*How far approximately will you travel to Guild Awards?*

*These questions provide activity data required to calculate carbon footprint resulting from travel.*

# BUSINESS TRAVEL OVERSEAS



## Transport

We understand that travelling for work is often unavoidable, so if virtual events are not an option, picking the best mode of transport for your time away is important. Flying has the highest carbon footprint so, considering alternative transport options with the lowest carbon footprint, will help you find the option that suits you and the environment best.

The best transport options for international travel:

1st International Rail

2nd Ferry (foot passenger)

3rd Coach

4th Car

**Calculate** your travel carbon footprint.

## Accommodation

Your choice of accommodation could also be a good way to reduce your carbon footprint when traveling overseas. According to [www.greenvacations.com](http://www.greenvacations.com) both the Hilton and Marriott hotel chains are good choices.

Your transport and accommodation should be booked through **Clarity Travel**. Booking through Clarity will allow you to accurately track emissions.

For more detail on business travel, refer to our **Sustainable Business Travel Guidance**.



# CATERING AND REFRESHMENTS

Food production and processing is a **key driver of climate change**, with agriculture representing 11% of the UK's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Beyond GHG impacts, the food and drink you serve at events will also have an impact on the waste generated.

## Things to consider

- Audience and requirements
- Time and length of event
- Necessity of food and drinks
- Proportionality of catered food to number of guests
- Production process
- Transportation of food (distance, vehicle type and quantity)
- **Waste**

## What impacts could catering and refreshments have on the environment?

The choice of food can significantly reduce the environmental impacts. Over 50% of GHG emissions in the UK agricultural sector come from the digestive processes of livestock and the management of their waste. As such, offering a plant-based menu provides an opportunity to significantly reduce the emissions in the production of the food you offer.

Aside from the food and drink served at events, the cutlery, crockery, packaging and subsequent waste also present environmental impacts. Avoid plastic where possible, particularly individually packaged items which generate significant volumes of waste.

## Review your options

### Food

- No food- for short events, food may not be necessary. This would have the lowest carbon footprint and avoid waste.
- Simple snacks, such as fruit, saves money, waste, and is better for the environment.
- Lower carbon options, like plant based, vegetarian, local and minimally processed food, can be delicious alternatives to high carbon foods, like red meat.
- Food accreditations, such as Fairtrade and organic soil association, ensure that the food used for events is produced ethically and without harmful impacts on the environment.

### Top Tip!

Ask guests if they have any allergies, intolerances, or dietary requirements prior to the event so that you may cater to their names. Ensure food is clearly labelled with allergens and ingredients.

- Using the University's in-house catering team, **Delivered to You**, can offer great opportunities to increase the sustainability impact your event. University of Liverpool catering teams adhere to our **sustainable food policy** which details how we are including our social and environmental commitments into the food we serve. As an in-house team, they can also significantly reduce impacts associated with transport when events are held on campus.
- The University also has a **list of approved caterers**.

### Top Tip!

When sourcing an external caterer, opting for a local caterer could avoid a higher carbon footprint from transporting food and equipment. Other things to consider may be the number of vehicles required for food and equipment transportation, as well as how they will need to power their equipment, especially for outdoor events.

### Drinks

- When it comes to drinks, encouraging guests to bring their own refillable cups and bottles is a great way to reduce waste. Providing a **map to any refill water stations** in promotional material will help reinforce this behaviour.
- Serving any hot drinks in urns is an easy and convenient way to provide beverages in an energy efficient way.

### Crockery

- Avoid plastic where possible, particularly individually packaged items which generate significant volumes of waste.

- In terms of cutlery and crockery, consider utilising reusable items to avoid waste all together and where this is not possible, explore biodegradable options before single use plastics.

### Waste

- Have a plan in place for any leftover food. This could be a) organising for the catering company to collect uneaten food, b) takeaway options for guests, c) donate to a food pantry or d) compost waste after the event. Always consider the health and safety implications of leftover food. Food that is not individually packaged should not be donated, so opt for an alternative food waste solution.
- Catering for the correct number of people will avoid waste.
- Make sure **facilities** are in place for guests to appropriately segregate their waste between recyclables, general and food waste, and make sure these are clearly labelled to avoid cross contamination.

### Communicate

Asking attendees whether they will require food will help to prevent excessive food waste and save money. You can do so as a tick box question when they sign up to the event or via email, by requesting that anyone that does not require food, notify the event organisers.

### Data and feedback

Keeping track of the quantity of food ordered and consumed, and the volume of waste, will help you to understand the impact of the event and quantity of food needed for future events.



### Example

## Centre for Sustainable Business Launch Event

Organisers of the event identified that simple catering suited the event better, as it was not during a typical mealtime. Attendees were asked at registration to confirm if they wanted fresh fruit and hot drinks, so that these were not over catered for.

Water fountains were available at the venue and within the promotion material for the events, there featured details that encouraged attendees to bring their own reusable water bottles and coffee cups. Catering providers were briefed to ensure no plastic cups or trays were used so that materials had the lowest impact possible.

## Guild Awards

The Guild worked with Hospitality Liverpool to create a plant-based three course menu for Guild Awards. The menu was automatically plant-based but guests could opt out and replace the main course for a lower carbon meat main course. This gave guests the opportunity to try something new, that they wouldn't typically consider trying. 57% of guests had a fully plant-based meal, while the other 43% had a plant-based starter and dessert with a chicken main course (a lower carbon meat option).

*The starter and main course, by default, will be vegan, as we try to make this event as sustainable as possible, in line with the Guild's Sustainability Policy and our Green Impact Accreditation.*

*The final menu will be confirmed nearer the time, but will be similar to the following.*

*Starter:  
Mediterranean Mezze (vg)*

*Main:  
Beetroot and spinach Wellington with roasted butternut squash and sweet pimento sauce (vg)  
or  
Cornfed chicken with shallot ragout, braised hispi and heritage carrots*

*Would you prefer to have a meat-based meal?*

# PROMOTION

The way an event is marketed, and the products offered, can have significant environmental impacts in terms of production and waste.

## Things to consider

- Audience and requirements
- The role of promotional materials when marketing your event
- Production
- Materials
- Disposal

## What impacts could promotional materials have on the environment?

Considering what the materials are made from and how they can be disposed of sustainably will help avoid impacts from production and waste.

## Review your options

- Instead of using flyers or posters and other physical marketing, use digital means wherever possible. Through using emails, the University website, and social media you can target your chosen audience without having to produce and dispose of products.
- Digital screens around campus are a great way of sharing information. Adding QR codes to designs will take attendees to events pages for further details and the sign-up page.
- Consider who your audience is and approach, in person, people in particular groups or courses that you think might be interested in attending the event.
- Re-use signage and banners from previous events. If you opt to produce new materials, think carefully about how these can be reused in the future by avoiding including the use of dates or the name of the event.
- Share your resources! Reaching out to other departments or faculties could be beneficial when sharing commonly used items such as banners, decorations and table cloths.

## Communicate

If you have gone paperless, celebrate it, and let your guests know why you chose to promote the event sustainably.

## Data and feedback

Ask attendees how they heard about the event, then you know for where to put your efforts for the next event.



# MERCHANDISE

Merchandise such as pens and lanyards are common found items at events. Even well-intentioned products such as reusable water bottles, tote bags and coffee cups begin to mount up as more events offer these 'sustainable' options as freebies. It is important to consider how much value merchandise adds to your event, and whether there are more suitable alternatives available.

## Things to consider

- Objectives of the event
- The value merchandise adds
- Production
- Materials
- How the audience will use it and for how long
- How it will be disposed of

## What impacts could merchandise have on the environment?

Considering the full life-cycle of an item, from the production of the materials it is made from, to the way it is disposed of (and beyond), will help you to fully consider the environmental impact of merchandise. The impacts often involve using natural resources for materials, and energy for production. When merchandise is not produced sustainably, it often involves excessive pollution and release of carbon emissions. Too often, these items end up thrown away without use or lost at the back of a drawer.

## Review your options

- No merchandise is the best merchandise! Avoiding it all together saves money and the planet.
- Use merch left over from another event. When it's gone, it's gone, so try using incentives when giving away merchandise.
- Get creative! Think outside the box and consider alternative give-aways, such as discounts on experiences, activities or food and drink on campus.
- Buy merchandise sustainably: Use "**life-cycle thinking**" to identify the most sustainable merchandise, considering what its made from, how it is produced, how it will be used and disposed of. Try to keep branding and customisation to a minimum (e.g. use standard University branding over event-specific branding and avoid adding dates) to allow items to be used at future events or by other departments.
- Following the University's [procurement guidance for promotional merchandise](#) is a simple way to save money and make sure that your items are procured sustainably.

## Communicate

Talk to your suppliers about how things are produced and what they are made from. Communicating this with your guests so that they know how to dispose of it once they no longer want the item.

## Data and feedback

Keeping track of how much was spent on merchandise, what items were purchased and left over, is a great way to understand the impact of our purchasing. Ask attendees what they think. You may find that they don't need any freebies, or that they would rather have something made ethically and sustainably.

### Example

#### Meet the team sustainability stall at welcome week 2023

For welcome week 2023, the sustainability team chose to give away non-traditional merchandise, ditching the tote bags and keep-cups for herb growing kits, reusable cutlery, plastic free stationary sets and recyclable notebooks. All items had University branding and were purchased through university approved suppliers.

The team decided to only offer one item per person to avoid waste and incentivised receiving a free item by encouraging students to follow the *Livunisustainability* Instagram account and 'spin the wheel'. The spinning wheel decided which item they would receive making it a fair choice.

Students were excited to receive a free item and the increase in followers meant that sustainability coms will reach a wider audience, spreading awareness of sustainability issues, how students can get involved and the work the university is doing on sustainability.

# PARTNERS AND COMMUNITY

The University of Liverpool is both a successful global institution and an 'anchor' institution, making an invaluable contribution to the economy and social wellbeing of the Liverpool city region. The University also has a thriving community of sustainability advocates throughout the institution and collaboration can help you achieve greater outcomes and allow your events to reach a larger audience.

## Procurement

Where you decide to procure goods and services for your events, consider local options where possible. This will not only reduce the environmental impacts associated with travel and transport, but also allows the University to enhance its positive impact on the local community and foster greater relationships with our neighbours.

## In-house partners

Across the University there are a wide variety of departments, faculties and student organisations putting on events with sustainability at their core. Seek out opportunities to share best practice and collaborate on marketing opportunities to support each other's aims. There may even be opportunities to host joint events, providing the chance to increase your audience and pool resources to reduce impacts.



## Local partnerships

Merseyside is host to a range of businesses, groups and organisations that are involved in new and exciting opportunities, or that may be looking for to share and gain support, ideas and contacts. Making positive partnerships with people in our community is a great way to achieve mutually beneficial goals and champion what we do at the University.

**VENUE**

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Is an in-person event necessary?				
Is the venue accessible for wheelchair users?				
Is the venue an appropriate size for the number of guests attending?				
Could this be an outdoor event?				
Does the venue have any sustainability credentials? For example, BREEM, Passivhaus, ISO14001				
Does the venue have suitable waste management facilities, such as a recycling and food waste bins as well as general waste?				
Does the venue make use of energy saving equipment and appliances?				
Does the venue have good access to natural light?				
Is the venue in an area that might disturb biodiversity from noise or light pollution?				
If using a temporary structure (teepee, marquee etc), is it heated and powered sustainably?				
Are you able to adjust heating and cooling of the venue accordingly?				
Are you able to adjust heating and cooling of the venue accordingly?				
Can you adjust the lighting in the venue?				
Does the venue have motion sensors for corridor lights and reminders to turn lights off when leaving rooms?				
Does the venue have a quiet room, prayer room and/or breastfeeding space?				

To assess your event, use our checklist to identify the areas in which you have had an impact.

For further information, support, or to share the success of your sustainable event, contact the Sustainability Team at [sustainability@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:sustainability@liverpool.ac.uk).



# CONTACT US


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THE ORIGINAL

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