

Cavendish Conference Venues

Guide for Producing a Sustainable Event

These guidelines are for the assistance of the organisers of training courses, meetings, conferences, seminars, exercises and other events, who want their events to be as environmentally responsible as practicable. Where there is a need to gather people together in one place, there are significant opportunities for ensuring that environmental impacts are either eliminated or at least minimised - whilst also providing social and economic benefits.

These guidelines have been produced in line with the British Standard 8901 for sustainable event management. The key areas to consider when organising events are around the choice of venue and location to minimise CO2 emissions, selection of the most sustainable catering options and reducing waste before, during and after the event. This is not an exhaustive list and not all the points listed here will be relevant for all events – but we hope they will provide an outline guide towards eliminating or reducing environmental impacts of events and in choosing suppliers who can help the process.

Choosing the Venue

- The first thing to consider is whether a physical meeting is necessary at all. This is particularly relevant for events involving a few participants or of short duration. See also the point below about video conferencing.
- Where possible, use venues that have a clear and committed environmental policy (and potentially associated environmental procedures). Ask potential venues about their environmental policy and request a copy. In assessing their level of commitment things to look for include:
 - Is it signed by the head of the organisation?
 - Is it up to date?
 - Is there clear evidence they practice what they promise?
 - Has it been amended (for example is there a version number)?
 - Does it encompass all the activities of the organisation that have significant environmental impacts?
- Choose a venue that has good access via public transport which reduces the need for delegates to travel by car. When giving travel directions, start with the least impactful (walking, bike, train...). If in a city centre, include links to the local public transport network including park and ride. Delegate travel generally accounts for the biggest proportion of the carbon footprint of an event.
- Recommend accommodation within walking distance of the venue or use a venue which also offers accommodation.
- Book the venue for the least amount of space/number of rooms and the least amount of time needed – minimising unnecessary lighting, heating, air conditioning and avoiding waste.
- Where possible choose rooms for meeting/catering/exhibition areas which are naturally lit and have natural ventilation.
- Venues offering in-house technical equipment and support, for example staging, AV, can reduce the need for transportation of such equipment.
- If you have to hire AV support, try and use a locally based company to reduce travel footprint and support the local economy.

- Consider offering video conferencing as an alternative to personal attendance and/or recording the event for wider availability subsequently via the internet/intranet.
- Encourage organisers, speakers and delegates to travel to the venue by public transport, cycling and on-foot by providing information to assist them in making comparisons such as location plans, rail timetables, bus routes, cycling availability and walking directions with estimated distances and times.
- Request information at registration on how delegates plan to travel to the event and study the replies to consider whether there are any opportunities to promote environmentally friendly travel, for example public transport and car sharing.

Arranging Catering

- Check the environmental policy for catering arrangements including, if applicable, the involvement of subcontractors and suppliers.
- Avoid providing unhealthy foods and drinks for example those that are high in fats, sugars and salts and plan to avoid unnecessary waste, for example by taking into consideration likely numbers of people who may not show up on the day.
- Ensure that dietary requirements, including allergies, can be catered for - use event registration to obtain information in advance.
- Consider adopting vegetarian food as your default option - use the opportunity to give people a positive experience of a meat and fish free diet. Vegetables have a significantly reduced carbon footprint than meat or fish.
- Select meals which can make use of seasonal local produce wherever possible – buying local food avoids unnecessary transportation and helps keep money in the local economy. For guidance on what is seasonal food in the UK visit: <http://tinyurl.com/ce64res>
- If serving fish, make your selection from sustainable sources. The Marine Conservation Society has a useful list: <http://www.fishonline.org/fish-advice/eat/>
- Specify where possible products which are Fair Trade or equivalent.
- Provide tap water freshly drawn and chilled served in jugs or bottled on the premises, not bottled mineral water.
- Minimise the use of individually packaged food and drink items for example by serving loose biscuits and providing milk in jugs and sugar in bowls.
- Use reusable crockery, glassware, and cutlery wherever possible.

Reducing Waste Before, During, and After the Event

Before the Event

- Use websites and email to promote the event where possible. This also allows you to update the programme and send out joining instructions.
- If possible, use electronic registration (this also allows you to offer 'early bird' discounts) - alternatively, minimise the length of the registration form and offer submission by fax or scanned copy.
- If possible, publish the event agenda online.

- Use double sided printing for any necessary promotional or event material and ask exhibitors to do the same. Ensure the paper has a high recycled content. If having the printing done professionally look for a local print company that promotes sustainability, minimises use of chemicals and uses recycled materials.
- Prepare portable generic display materials and signage where possible rather than creating one-off displays for particular events.
- Where the venue already provides signage electronically avoid generating your own hard copy signage.
- Remember, if you provide giveaway items these should be sustainable as well.
- Provide re-usable name badges and make a point of collecting them from delegates at the end of the event.
- Consider alternatives to providing delegate packs, for example use of websites and email.
- Format any necessary handouts so as to minimise paper usage and avoid distribution of copies of presentations where possible. Delegates can always download copies from the internet or have them sent by email.

During the Event

- Adjust lighting, heating and air conditioning to maintain comfort and avoid energy wastage.
- Only give out writing materials as needed.
- Minimise use of high wattage stage lighting and switch off lights, air conditioning and electronic equipment when meeting rooms are not in use.
- Use white boards in preference to flipcharts in workshop presentations. Flipchart paper can be used on both sides.

At the end of the Event

- Avoid the need for subsequent postage. Hand out CPD/attendance certificates at the event or send them by email afterwards. Collect completed evaluation forms and provide opportunities for submitting online evaluation.
- Collect in re-usable name badges and any unused/unwanted items for re-use.

Analyse and Improve

- Analyse after the event what was successful in meeting sustainable event management objectives and what was not, and use this information in planning future events.
- Share your experiences with others.
- Keep records to contribute to your benchmarking.