

Eventbrite

Sustainability 101: The Guide to a Greener Festival



Most of us would like to reduce our impact on the environment, but it can feel difficult to make changes - even on an individual basis. If you are organising a big event like a festival and must persuade hundreds or thousands of attendees to adopt sustainable practices, it's especially daunting.

Although the challenge is bigger, the rewards are also greater - introducing a green initiative at a large event can dramatically lower its carbon footprint and really make a difference to the environment.

In this guide, we'll give you practical ideas for making your event more sustainable, as well as some suggested resources to help put them into practice.

This guide is for...

Owners and directors of festivals and outdoor events with 200+ attendees.

You'll learn how to...

- Identify what aspects of your festival make the biggest impact on its sustainability
- Get started on implementing a sustainable initiative
- Understand festival eco-trends through real case studies

Contents

Climate Change
Understanding Your Festival's Impact 04

Transportation
Audience Travel 06

Energy
Powering Your Festival 08

Food
Environmentally Conscious Catering 10

Waste
Eliminating Single-Use Plastic 13

Waste
Recycling & Composting 16

Toilets
Green Options 18

Ticketing
Going Paperless 20

Procurement
Greening the Supply Chain 22

Next Steps
Certification 24



The UN states that, “there is no country in the world that is not experiencing first-hand the drastic effects of climate change”. As a result, it is calling for urgent climate action, as one of the [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) set in 2015.

You might not think one event makes that much difference but, according to [The Climate Coalition](#), the figures stack up quickly.

“ Attending a festival can lead to an average of 2.3kg of CO₂ per person each night in on-site emissions. That means a festival of 20,000 people can produce a whopping 138,000 kgs of emissions over just three nights! One of the biggest culprits, contributing to 65% of these emissions, comes from burning diesel, which powers generators for the stages, food stalls, and other items to help keep the festival running

Jessica Marsh of The Climate Coalition

The good news is, with the bulk of emissions coming from just a few places, it's easier to introduce initiatives to bring them down. Just one change - such as switching to smaller generators - really can make a dent.

Introducing initiatives to change the way people get to your event can have a big impact on climate change.

“Festival organisers can significantly reduce their on-site emissions simply through better planning, system design, and reducing their energy demand,” says Marsh. “They can also look at using hybrid technologies and sustainable fuels, which could lead to a huge 50% reduction in diesel emissions without majorly disrupting their events.”

Audience travel is another massive contributor of emissions. Consequently, introducing initiatives to change the way people get to your event can have a big impact on climate change.

According to Marsh, “If just 60% of festival-goers travelled by coach and train and the remaining people opted to carpool, the carbon savings would be greater than the total onsite operational emissions of the festival itself.”



Case Study

Shambala Festival has shown that it's entirely possible to run a low impact festival. Over four years ago, they switched to 100% renewable energy by reducing demand, using more efficient generators, using waste vegetable oil to power the generators, and installing solar panels to power everything else— all this without increasing their relative costs!



People travel long distances to attend festivals and this unfortunately results in high levels of emissions. You might feel that audience travel is something beyond your control but there are many good examples of festivals influencing the methods of transportation used by attendees.

[Julie's Bicycle](#), an organisation that conducts research around environmental issues in the music industry, has looked extensively at audience travel. Their report [Jam Packed](#), found that 72% of people going to a festival travelled by car and the average one-way distance travelled ranged from 70 miles to 140 miles. Furthermore, 60% of cars travelling to festivals have only one or two people travelling in them.

“ Festivals often don't have good public transport links so the car is perceived as the most convenient option, but there have been many successful initiatives to challenge this. Whether that's pairing bus tickets with discounted admission tickets that you only receive on the bus, car parking charges that get waived if people car share, or preferential access in terms of parking. There's a big number of things that can be done to try and drive people to travel more sustainably.

Chiara Badiali of Julie's Bicycle

You can encourage car sharing by making the car park closest to the festival entrance only available to people who have shared cars.

Car sharing is a simple way to reduce the number of cars arriving on site. Partner with platforms like [BlaBlaCar](#), [GoCarShare](#) and [Liftshare](#) and they'll help you with marketing materials, as well as reporting how many car miles have been taken off the road so you can really see the results of your efforts.

"You can encourage car sharing by making the car park closest to the festival entrance only available to people who have shared cars. It means you actually have an easier journey by going together," says Badiali.

In addition to car sharing, a new initiative introduced by Festival Republic, which organises festivals like Download, Latitude, Reading and Leeds, is carbon balancing. £1 of the cost of the parking pass is donated to [Energy Revolution](#) to be invested in renewable energy projects.

Claire O'Neill from [A Greener Festival](#), an organisation which assesses and advises events on their sustainability, adds that organisers should promote low carbon travel options, such as [Big Green Coach](#).

"Also, measure who comes by what mode, how far, and motivators that could reduce car usage. Don't forget production, artist, crew and on-site transport!"



Case Study

Glastonbury's Green Traveller programme rewards people for travelling by public transport or bicycle with a special Green Traveller lanyard. This provides them with discount vouchers for food and merchandise, exclusive solar showers and access to compost toilets. Glastonbury also offers 15,000 coach + ticket packages in advance of general sale, rewarding green travellers with the chance to be the first to secure their tickets.



As we discovered earlier, the use of diesel on festival sites is a major contributor to CO2 emissions. Powerful Thinking is a think-tank that has been formed to come up with ways to reduce both carbon and costs through increased efficiency and alternatives.

It recommends swapping diesel-powered generators for renewable energy sources like solar, WVO biofuel (reprocessed waste vegetable oil) and wind power, all of which are carbon zero-rated.

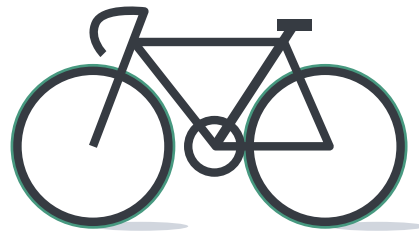


According to Powerful Thinking, solar and/or hybrid systems can often be good solutions for:

- Small to medium sized music stages – make a very visible demonstration of commitment to renewable power
- Campsite lighting e.g. LED festoon – these run silently so will make for happy campers
- Box offices – they often have low power needs, and may be in outlying areas where power isn't otherwise provided
- Production compound – as the first area to be set up and last to leave, it's a great opportunity for fuel saving over a longer time period
- Pumps for on-site water management and distribution



Julie's Bicycle points out that when you are considering alternative fuels, it's important to make sure you're not buying any products that have unintended environmental consequences, such as deforestation. Check out their [Biofuels Sourcing Guide](#).



Case Study

In 2010, Frieze Art Fair switched exclusively to WVO biodiesel generators - a move which immediately reduced the Fair's associated carbon emissions by 60%. Meanwhile, 300W halogen floodlights were replaced by 70W metal halides to increase energy efficiency. These changes resulted in the carbon footprint per visitor being recorded as only 0.25kg CO₂e, down 90% on previous years.

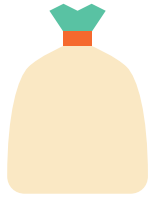


The provision of food on site impacts an event's carbon footprint in a number of ways - from the energy taken to produce and transport it, through to how much is wasted. More than one third of all food produced is never eaten - and festivals, with their plethora of catering options, can be guilty of contributing to the problem.

“ Food waste is an environmental catastrophe - in fact, food waste is the third largest contributor to climate change after the USA and China. Often, at events, it is very difficult to predict how much food will be eaten so over-catering is commonplace. OLIO aims to help event managers have zero waste events by redistributing any uneaten/unserved food to the local community.

Viv Taylor from food redistribution platform [OLIO](#)

Eventbrite has partnered with OLIO to make food redistribution for festivals incredibly simple. By filling in an online form, you can request a Food Waste Hero volunteer to collect all the leftover food at the end of your event. They will redistribute the food on your behalf, providing it to anyone in need - from students and pensioners to struggling families.



“You will be asked a brief series of questions to ensure the food is safe to redistribute. We have a food safety management system which governs the safe collection, handling, storage and redistribution of food and we have thousands of portions of food shared each week safely in local communities across the globe,” says Taylor.

Other food redistribution organisations include [Eighth Plate](#) and London-based [City Harvest](#). But as well as making provisions for any food waste, Sam Wilson from [Eco Events](#) says you should try to reduce it through proper planning.

““ Serve less food by accurately estimating the volume of food required. Is there any historic data that can inform previous food wastage? This may be available, for example, on waste transfer notes or event debrief notes. Engage all relevant third parties and keep everyone in the comms loop – suppliers can be a source of free consultancy. They know their job better than you do, so listen to them and use their expertise in your planning.

Viv Taylor from food redistribution platform [OLIO](#)

Chiara Badiali of Julie's Bicycle adds that serving locally-sourced, seasonal produce and cutting down on meat can make a big difference to the carbon emissions associated with your festival's food.

“Meat has a much bigger climate footprint than fruit or vegetables so when we run events our catering is always 50% vegetarian and 50% vegan. Mainstream festivals that are entirely vegetarian include Way Out West in Sweden and Shambala. At Waves Festival in Vienna all the backstage catering is vegetarian. You simply edit the choice architecture or make people ask for meat rather than providing it by default.”



Case Study

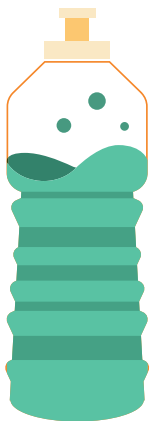
With the majority of their attendees not being vegetarian or vegan, Shambala was nervous about going meat and fish-free. However, they discussed their desire to try the initiative with their audience. The trial in 2016 went well, with 77% of attendees voting to keep the festival meat and fish-free for future years. The move has not only reduced meat-related carbon emissions, it has dramatically reduced the amount of food waste, by reducing perishables that can't be taken off site.

While it's not necessarily easy to visualise the impact that transport and energy-use have on the environment, it's much more tangible when it comes to bags of rubbish. Festivals produce masses of waste and most of it goes straight to landfill. In fact, [WRAP](#) reports that almost 13% of landfill in the UK can be linked back to the event and hospitality industry.

The biggest problem, says Melinda Watson, Founder/CEO of [Raw Foundation](#), is plastic: "About 90% of plastic packaging worldwide is not recycled."

For that reason, Watson advocates avoiding single-use plastic altogether and, alongside the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF), has enlisted over 60 independent festivals to aim to be plastic-free by 2021. [Download RAW Foundation's guide to going plastic-free.](#)

So how does this work in practice? The main culprits for plastic waste at festivals are drinks bottles and cups, straws, cutlery, and serving ware. Melinda says festivals are avoiding these by championing reusable or compostable alternatives.



“ Shambala has been brave to really explicitly state to their suppliers what’s allowed. For example, the food vans don’t sell plastic bottles of fizzy drinks; they have cans. A lot of the stall holders have ceramic mugs and stainless steel cutlery, just like a cafe would. The result is that there is virtually no litter at Shambala now.

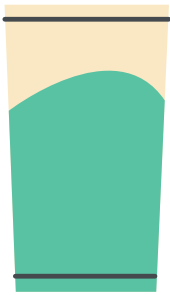
Melinda Watson, Founder/CEO of [Raw Foundation](#)

Working with a bar provider operating a reusable cup scheme, such as [Refresh West](#), festivals can ask attendees to pay a deposit for their cup and bring it back to the bar each time in exchange for a clean one. Their money is refunded when they finally return the cup. Alternatively, festival goers can bring their own cup or buy a branded one, which they can keep as a souvenir.

Providing safe, free drinking water is essential if you plan to ban the sale of bottled water, like Shambala has. Working with the charity [FRANK Water](#) the festival is providing free chilled and filtered water at the main bars, and at water points.

“ Shambala has been very clear with their marketing about what they’re expecting festival goers to do and compliance is extremely high – 96% of the audience bring their own reusable bottle now.

Melinda Watson, Founder/CEO of [Raw Foundation](#)



Research conducted by Eventbrite shows that access to free water is a major concern for festival goers. Nearly 40% of people we surveyed said it was the number one thing they’d like to see at festivals this year.

40%

of festival goers said that access to free water at festivals is a major concern



Case Study

The organisers of Glastonbury Festival have previously estimated that one million plastic bottles are used during the event. In 2014, Glastonbury introduced reusable stainless steel bottles and refill water kiosks in collaboration with Raw Foundation and WaterAid, to clearly signpost and provide cost-free water for any kind of receptacle. When the festival returns in 2019, it is set to implement a site-wide ban on plastic bottles.



If you decide to go plastic-free but opt for biodegradable disposables instead, don't forget that these must be sent to a specialist composting facility in order to remain an environmentally friendly option.

Since there is little oxygen available in landfill, even organic matter can't degrade well. Consequently, if you dump paper straws or bamboo cutlery in normal bins, it's still creating an environmental problem. A study conducted by University of Arizona researchers uncovered still-recognisable 25-year-old hot dogs, corncoobs and grapes in landfills, as well as 50-year-old newspapers that were still readable!

At Wireless Festival a three bin system is operated: **Compost** – for food waste, compostable plates, cutlery and napkins, **Recycling** – for plastic bottles, aluminium cans, newspapers, magazines and clean and dry cardboard, **General Waste** - for anything non-compostable or non-recyclable.

“ Use the [European Waste Hierarchy](#) and make sure that what you bring on site can be reused or at the very least recycled. Ensure that your procurement speaks to your waste management. Instead of viewing these as separate, view them as one area - resources management.

Claire O'Neill from A Greener Festival

For effective resources management, you'll also need to enlist the help of your marketing and comms team to communicate with your attendees. It's essential to get festival goers on-side to cooperate with your recycling efforts.

Incentivising attendees by levying a deposit on items you want returned for recycling or offering other rewards has been proven to work well. As Chiara Badiali of Julie's Bicycle tells us, "I've seen apps for public engagement where festival goers can collect points for doing certain things on-site, such as recycling or signing a petition. They can then spend those points on buying a pint or entering a competition to win tickets for next year.

"[Reverse vending machines](#) are another great idea. If you put your plastic bottle in it gives you something back in return, such as discount vouchers or even lottery tickets."

Amassing an army of volunteers to help with waste collection and recycling sorting is also key. You can work with an organisation such as [Festival Green Machine](#), which provides voluntary clean-up teams with 40% disabled or disadvantaged members, so you can do your bit for the community as well as the environment.



Case Study

Festival Republic partners with Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth Ireland to run cup and bottle deposit return stations. Paper cups must be collected and sent for specialist recycling in order to strip out their plastic lining (operated by [Simply Cups](#)). More than 600,000 paper cups were recycled at Reading and Leeds festival in 2017, while 290,000 cups and bottles were collected at Electric Picnic Festival.

An average
flush uses
between
6-15
litres of water

Compost
toilets reduce
transportable
waste by up to
90%

When we talk about waste, we mustn't forget that this includes waste produced by the attendees themselves. The way you manage sewage at an event can seriously impact the environment, for better or for worse. Chemical flushing toilets require large volumes of water - an average flush uses between 6 to 15 litres of water (this is often precious drinking water). They also use chemicals that can upset the natural biological methods used to treat sewage at sewage treatment plants.

Furthermore, trucking thousands, sometimes millions of litres of liquid waste from your festival to the nearest treatment plant or sewer line access point will add significantly to your overall transport emissions.

A green alternative is a no-flush, compost toilet, such as those made by [Thunderbox](#) or [Natural Event](#). Not only do compost toilets not require water, they are chemical free, odour free and reduce transportable waste by up to 90%. Compost toilets also produce an end product that is beneficial to the land, helping tackle the problem of soil infertility.

However, compost toilets are not the only value-generating sanitation solution; [Loowatt](#) for example, works with utility companies to turn waste from its toilets into biogas and electricity.



Case Study

At Boom Festival in Portugal, poop is regarded as black gold. In 2016, the festival had 348 compost toilets spread across the venue, achieving a saving of more than 500,000 litres of water over the course of the event. Meanwhile, by collecting the human manure of 30,000+ attendees, the festival contributed to the production of tons of fertiliser to nurture the earth.



For large festivals with lots of attendees, providing printed tickets will come at quite a cost to the environment - not only in terms of the paper used, but also the ink and energy required for printing.

Digital ticketing eliminates the need to waste resources and is also considerably more convenient for the festival goer, with the ticket delivered direct to their mobile device. Stored on their phones, tickets are protected from loss, damage or theft.

There's no need for attendees to print out their tickets; Eventbrite digital tickets feature barcodes or QR codes that can be scanned direct from the ticket holder's device. Scanning can be done using any mobile device loaded with the [Eventbrite Organiser app](#). Alternatively, Eventbrite can provide scanners.

As well as protecting the environment by preventing unnecessary carbon emissions, e-tickets provide a financial saving. Organisers can avoid the high costs associated with the printing and delivery of paper-based tickets. This saving can be passed on to attendees, with no need to charge for postage.



If your festival requires tighter security measures and you need to use wristbands, it's worth considering Eventbrite's [RFID entry management solution](#). Utilising chips that store customer details, the wristbands can be used to facilitate cashless payment, reducing the requirement for generator-powered cash machines on site and eliminating the need for printed drink tokens.



Case Study

According to the organisers of Bournemouth 7s Festival, switching to online ticketing with Eventbrite has given them an array of benefits. As well as allowing them to save resources and get tickets to attendees as quickly and securely as possible, it also gives them access to a vast amount of data. This data can be used to see how many people are on site at any one time, when individuals have entered or left the festival site, and how close to capacity the site is. The organisers of Bournemouth 7s say: "This helps us immensely when it comes to festival security."

Be sure that your sustainable procurement policy covers both environmental and ethical issues.

It's great to make your own business practices as environmentally friendly as possible. However, you can have an even bigger impact by inspiring your suppliers to make changes too.

Julie's Bicycle recommends developing a sustainable procurement policy, which states your organisation's minimum 'green' requirements for different suppliers, products and services. Part of the policy may include the decision process you expect to be followed for each purchase.

You can also set yourself targets and KPIs as part of an environmental policy and action plan. For example, a percentage of spend in high-impact areas switched over to 'greener' alternatives every year.

When choosing partners to work with, Claire O'Neill of A Greener Festival says: "Ask questions and look for certification, for example ensure that products such as tea, coffee, chocolate and sugar are Fairtrade. Ask for proof to back up any claims made."

When it comes to merchandise sold on site, consider the entire lifecycle of the products. Be sure that your sustainable procurement policy covers both environmental and ethical issues - after all, you don't want to sell organic cotton t-shirts that are manufactured in sweatshops.

“ Ensure that you use due diligence. Where are the raw materials coming from? How is the fabric manufactured? What is the dyeing and printing process and impact? Don't produce merchandise that will be treated as a non-recyclable, throwaway item.

Claire O'Neill from A Greener Festival

A great idea for a branded momento from your festival is a stainless steel water bottle. Buy yours from RAW Foundation and profits will go straight back into the organisation's plastic education work.



Case Study

The London ePrix electrically powered Formula E Championships created an online engagement programme to allow suppliers and other stakeholders to view and provide feedback on its sustainability policy and targets. This helped them achieve buy-in for initiatives such as asking suppliers to report on their CO2 outputs and offset emissions via eForest projects in the UK.



If you are committed to making your festival sustainable, you might wish to adhere to a set of officially recognised environmental guidelines, such as the [ISO 20121 International Standard for Sustainable Event Management](#).

This can give you the framework to get started, but it also provides the opportunity for certification. Being a certified sustainable event demonstrates your commitment to the world and can be a great marketing tool.

[Creative Green](#) is a certification scheme specifically tailored to the festival sector, operated by Julie's Bicycle. Meanwhile, A Greener Festival runs the [Greener Festival Award](#), which assesses and advises events on their sustainability.

“ There is a detailed self-assessment form for events who wish to apply for the award. This is followed by a site visit from our assessors and post-event review and report. The self-assessment process helps to guide events in 11 key areas of potential impact, including waste, transport, local area impacts, power, waste water, behavioural change and communication.

Claire O'Neill from A Greener Festival

O'Neill concedes that while "going green" will, over time, lead to savings from greater resource efficiency, it does require some initial investment.

"Realistically, investments need to be made in the management, personnel, expertise and the creation of better systems to achieve the efficiencies," she says.

The payoff, however, in terms of benefit to the environment and the community, can be massive: "If you extrapolate the actions of one festival or event by all festivals and events, that is a staggering change. Furthermore the event can have impact beyond itself through the actions and ideas it inspires through the participants."



Case Study

Festival Republic has taken part in Creative Green Certification since 2007. Last year, it was awarded 4 out of 5 stars at its Latitude, Download, Reading and Leeds festivals - a big improvement on the 1 star Reading and Leeds previously had and the 2 stars Download had. Meanwhile, Electric Picnic was awarded 3 out of 5 stars in its first year of participation. Festival Republic was also awarded Best Creative Group at the 2017 Creative Green Awards, recognised for leveraging its position to have industry-wide positive effects.

Conclusion

We all have a part to play in saving our planet from the ongoing and increasing dangers of climate change. Consider the easiest and quickest new initiatives that you can implement at your event - it could be as simple as providing more water stations or having a designated car park closer to the site for car-sharing attendees.

Use our list of organisations below to help you take that next step and make sure that your event joins the growing community of events that are really making a difference.

For more information on making the switch to paper-free ticketing and registration, call our team on **0800 652 4993** or get in touch [here](#).

Directory of Suppliers and Organisations



Education, Consultancy & Certification

- [A Greener Festival](#)
- [Eco Events](#)
- [Energy Revolution](#)
- [Julie's Bicycle](#)
- [Love Your Tent](#)
- [Positive Impact](#)
- [Powerful Thinking](#)
- [RAW Foundation](#)
- [Sustainable Event Alliance](#)
- [The Climate Coalition](#)
- [WRAP](#)



Decor Sharing & Recycling

- [Dresd](#)
- [House of Bestival](#)
- [Museum Freecycle](#)
- [Scenery Salvage](#)
- [Set Exchange](#)



Drinking Water & Reusable Cups

- [Envirocup](#)
- [FRANK Water](#)
- [Refresh West](#)



Food Redistribution

- [City Harvest](#)
- [Eighth Plate](#)
- [OLIO](#)



Lighting

- [TCP Event Lighting](#)



Merchandise

- [Pic 'n' Mix Festival Kit](#)



Recycling

- [Every Can Counts](#)
- [Festival Green Machine](#)
- [NiftyBins](#)
- [Simply Cups](#)
- [TOMRA](#)



Toilets

- [Loowatt](#)
- [Natural Event](#)
- [Thunderbox](#)



Transport

- [Big Green Coach](#)
- [BlaBlaCar](#)
- [GoCarShare](#)
- [Liftshare](#)
- [Tuned In Transport](#)

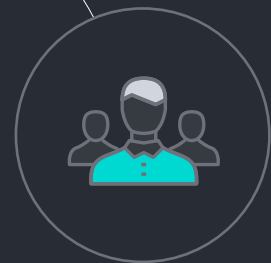
Eventbrite

Powering more than two million events each year.

Eventbrite is the world's leading event technology platform. Hundreds of thousands of organisers use Eventbrite to boost ticket sales, promote and manage events, handle on-site operations, and analyse results across multiple sales channels.



Grow your event
Sell more tickets to Eventbrite's nearly 65 million active ticket buyers.



Impress your attendees
Delight with ease of purchase, convenient ticket access, and speedier entry.



Simplify your planning
Promote, manage, and analyse your event from any device.

[Talk to an event expert](#)

[View on-demand demo](#)