Tips to make your event sustainable

It is increasingly important that conferences and events have positive environmental and social impact on the destination in which they are hosted. These are just some key things to consider when organising your event.

Determine the environmental impact first

If you're serious about sustainability, you'll think of the impact before you plan anything else. This way, you can be proactive about minimising your carbon footprint as you go.

Research local, eco-friendly venues and suppliers

By choosing local organisations that care as much about sustainability as you do, you're supporting right-thinking businesses whilst also reducing environmental impact. Win-win. Try Durham County Cricket Club who have eliminated single-use plastics from their venue, Delta Hotel by Marriott in Durham who are Green Key certified, and Maldron Hotel in Newcastle who are Green Meeting accredited.

Go plastic- and paper-free

Reducing or avoiding single-use plastics and paper is an excellent way to cut down on unnecessary waste. Provide delegates with reusable cups and use metal or wooden cutlery and reusable plates for meals. Remember too that while paper is a common alternative to plastic, you should limit its use. If you can't reduce it, make sure you have clearly signposted paper recycling facilities on site. Want to offer event merchandise? Check out sustainable choices such as organic cotton tote bags and bamboo pens.

Engage with the community

Galvanise your conference delegates and have a positive impact on the local community by organising litter picks, tree planting or local food bank donations. Try the likes of Coast Care for coastal litter picking in Northumberland, volunteering at The People's Kitchen in Newcastle, or Clean It, Green It in Sunderland.

Implement plans to minimise food and water wastage

Rather than giving away plastic bottles of water, help to ensure that only water that is needed is used by encouraging delegates to bring their own reusable bottles and having refill stations around the venue.

Avoid over-catering for your event. Keep an updated list of delegates and try to take food orders ahead of time if possible. If any food is left over, donate it to a local food kitchen such as the Magic Hat Café in Newcastle or Refuse Café in Chester-le-Street.

Serve organic, locally sourced food and drink

Utilise the North East's tourism and hospitality supply chain directory BuySupply to minimise food miles as well as support local producers. Think about a vegan or meat-free menu or work alongside socially conscious caterers like Big River Bakery or Magic Hat Café – the latter produces delicious menus from food that would have otherwise ended up in landfill. An excellent way of encouraging delegates to eat sustainably is to have opt-out vegetarian option instead of opt-in.

Go digital where you can

Swap out printed handouts for online and downloadable event programmes and itineraries. We can also introduce you to technology partners who can produce digital programmes and bespoke web apps. Consider whether it would be viable to host a hybrid event – it'll be more accessible as well as sustainable if people have the option of attending virtually, without travelling at all.

Make a sustainable travel choice

Encourage delegates to use sustainable transport options. Hop on board the largest light rail system outside of London, the Tyne and Wear Metro, or travel around the region on Go North East and Stagecoach's groundbreaking fleet of electric and zero-emission buses. Lumo operates an entirely electric fleet to and from London and Edinburgh from their base in Newcastle, and LNER operates a large number of services to stations across the area with an excellent sustainability record. Many of our towns and cities are also walkable in under 20 minutes, saving you time, money, and the environment.

Keen to plan your visit or ask us something?

Our business events team is ready to help. Get in touch at conventionbureau@ngi.org.uk, or find out more at destinationnortheastengland.co.uk

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