Green Events - Code of Practice

Sustainable targets and standards for the outdoor events industry

Version 2.5 - 19th November 2025

Local authorities, event organisers, and the UK Government have clearly stated the need for a nationally consistent approach to environmental sustainability in the live events sector since 2021.[1]

The Green Events Code of Practice (GECoP) provides nationally consistent guidelines for sustainable event management for event organisers, local authorities, environmental organisations, and the supply chain. It provides a practical framework for assessment and gap analysis of practices at all scales; individual events, cities, regions and national. It can be used on a voluntary or mandatory basis.

The code is an industry-adopted framework which unlocks effective, scale-able, low cost and nationally consistent assessment by non-experts with benchmarking and insight for policy making. Assessment can be integrated into existing processes, such as site permissions, funding applications and the assessment of local authority-run events.

The code has been produced by a working group of industry experts and organisations chaired by LIVE Green on behalf of Vision for Sustainable Events, the environmental forum for the UK outdoor events industry. It will be reviewed annually.

GECoP represents a science-based approach aligned with relevant existing frameworks, initiatives and standards (where available), both global, national, and sector-specific.[2] It references the actions outlined in the Climate Transition Plan 2030 for the UK Live Outdoor Events Sector.[3]

It is understood that events vary substantially in type, size, frequency, location, audience demographic, level of resources, and maturity on their sustainability journey. They also have differing levels of control over the source of their emissions. For those newly adopting the code in any year, actions should be taken in the first year possible.

---

[1] *DCMS Select Committee on The Future of UK Music Festivals - report (May 2021)*

[2] *The Paris Agreement*, *The UK climate Change Act (2008)*, *Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener*, *UN Race to Zero*, *Net Zero Carbon Events Pledge*, *UNFCCC Sports For Climate Action Framework*, *LIVE Green Beyond Zero Declaration*, *Show Must Go On: Impact Report for the UK Festival and Outdoor Event Industry (2020, Vision:2025)*, *Super Low Carbon Music Report (Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, 2021*).

[3] *Pending publication: The Show Must Go On: Climate Transition Plan 2030 for the Live Outdoor Events Sector (Vision for Sustainable Events, February 2026).*

The Green Events Code of Practice © 2025 by Vision for Sustainable Events (C/O Julies Bicycle) is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 DEED

Principles

1. **Act** urgently on the climate crisis in line with scientific evidence and best practice.
2. **Commit** to knowledge sharing within the industry; we are in this together.
3. **Transparent** measurement and reporting of impacts annually.
4. **Ambitious** commitment to improve year-on-year, with a commitment to innovation, accepting that not all climate-positive decisions will provide cost-benefits in the short term.
5. **Communicate** actively for positive change, acknowledging our events have a unique power to amplify solutions-based messaging around the climate crisis.

Overall Aim

Commit to a 50% reduction of carbon (CO_2e) emissions by 2030 and total reduction by 2050 at the latest.[4]

Guidelines for practices and targets

Positive Influence

- Inspire positive change in behaviour with audiences, artists, supply chain, partners and sponsors, staff and local community.
- Develop partnerships and/or creative programming on environment and climate themes.
- Invest in environmental initiatives, restoration of nature and positive social impact.

Governance

- Have a strategy in place to reduce your environmental impacts across key impact areas, e.g., energy and eliminating fossil fuel use, food, waste management, single-use plastics etc.[5], carbon emissions reductions in line with overall targets, by the end of 2025 (or first year possible).[6]
- Every organisation (size and type dependent) should measure impacts (including CO_2e) annually by the end of 2025 (or first year possible), and aim for assessment and reporting to be independently verified by 2030.[7]
- Include sustainability as a key factor in purchasing decisions.
- Identify a person responsible to lead on sustainability delivery and ensure they have the authority to take action.

---

[4] Using a 'baseline' year first, i.e., the first year of data available.

[5] This will differ depending on the size and shape of your organisation. Although you may not need to legally as an SME, attempt to align with UK Government guidance which can be found here UK Business Climate Hub and SME Climate Hub, bearing in mind these are not event industry specific but may provide some useful resources and guidance.

[6] See '30 climate actions for events' put forward in The Show Must Go On: Climate Transition Plan 2030 for the Live Outdoor Events Sector (Vision for Sustainable Events, November 2025).

[7] Micro and small festivals may not have ability to measure emissions, and should report key data/results across impact categories.

Energy

- Use the Power Hierarchy for planning temporary energy.[8]
- Take immediate steps towards achieving 100% renewable electricity use in buildings by the end of 2025 (or first year possible), i.e., use green tariffs in company offices.
- Transition to clean mobile power (e.g., grid connection and onsite renewables) by 2030, in line with the United Nations Accelerator City (UNAC) 'Statement of Intent'.[9]
- Aim for a 100% reduction in onsite fossil fuel consumption at live events by 2030, with HVO fuel use as a bridge where electric or green hydrogen can't meet power needs.

Travel and Transportation

- Put a plan in place to reduce direct and stakeholder travel and transport emissions by 2025 (or first year possible)..
- Promote and incentivise the use of public transport for audiences, e.g., work with transport providers and communicate effectively with audiences.
- Collaborate with stakeholders, including contractors, traders and partners, to reduce production transport and the associated emissions, e.g., use local suppliers, plan logistics and encourage the use of Clean Air Zone/Ultra Low Emission Zone-compliant vehicles or electric fleets.[10]
- Aim for 100% reduction of fossil fuel in site vehicles by 2030, e.g., plant machinery, buggies, shuttles.
- Balance unavoidable travel and transport emissions with responsible certified investments and / or donations to climate solutions and environmental restoration programs.

Food & Drink

- Increase plant-based meals year-on-year, aim to be plant-based with no red meat onsite by 2030.
- Establish a food and drinks policy which requires recognised product standards (e.g., Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance, Organic, Higher Animal Welfare standards).
- Minimise food waste and repurpose all non-perishable, edible, left-over food.
- Ensure food waste is managed as a separate waste stream back-of-house by traders and organisers, and that it is processed to compost-quality final waste, e.g., anaerobic digestion.

Materials & Waste

- Manage waste according to the Waste Hierarchy (see explanatory notes): Reduce the amount of overall material consumption onsite, avoid waste, prioritise reuse, and maximise recycling and composting (e.g., reusable cups).[11]

---

[8] The Powerful Thinking Guide - Smart Energy for Festivals and Events, Powerful Thinking (2017)

[9] *Pending publication – United Nations Accelerator City (UNAC) Statement of Intent To be published November 2025*

[10] UK wide Clean Air Zones (CAZ) and Ultra-Low Emission Zones (ULEZ) Since 2022, several cities have introduced or expanded CAZ/ULEZ, including Birmingham, Bradford, and London (with the ULEZ expansion on 29 August 2023). These zones charge polluting vehicles to enter, with stricter rules for heavy goods vehicles (HGVs).

[11] *Raising The Bar, LIVE, Julie's Bicycle, Hope Solutions (Oct 2023)*.

- Create a Materials Policy as a foundation for materials and waste management.[12]
- Front-of-house: Eliminate single-use plastic by 2027 (UK banned items include plates, bowls, trays, cutlery, polystyrene).[13] Implement a Deposit & Return Scheme or similar for drinks cups, e.g., use deposits on reusable bar cups.[14]
- Back-of-house: single-use plastics should be reduced, segregated and recycled.
- Ensure all serveware, e.g., food trays, napkins, cutlery, are reusable or compostable to EN 13432 standard, and sent for composting alongside food waste.

Water

- Connect to a mains water supply and sewage waste wherever possible to avoid transportation.
- Put a water conservation/saving plan in place by the end of 2025 (or first year possible).
- Ensure stringent guidelines on water management, including preventing pollution from greywater, sanitation, and site runoff.
- Encourage collaboration with local water authorities and environmental agencies to ensure compliance and best practice.[15]

Biodiversity & Ecological Management

- Make efforts to assess wildlife and nature on event sites and identify risks.*
- Mitigate the potential impact of the event (e.g. reducing light, or cordoning off areas to protect plants or habitats).
- Take measures to enhance habitats on site and/or invest in biodiversity protection and enhancement projects elsewhere.
- Consider how your supply chain impacts nature and wildlife nationally and globally, e.g., buying FSC certified wood reduces likelihood of deforestation.

**Notes:*

- *Requirements may already be outlined in license conditions or land/venue agreements.*
- *This may not be relevant for urban areas with little or no natural space.*
- *Many event organisers hire or lease their sites on a temporary basis, i.e., they are not landowners or sole users of a site, and therefore biodiversity assessment is not the responsibility of event organisers. However, efforts can be made to ask for existing surveys or request a survey be undertaken to gain understanding and take voluntary action.*

---

[12] *Sustainable Materials and Waste Toolkit, Vision for Sustainable Events (Feb 2024).*
[13] UK Gov Single Use Plastics Ban & Restrictions: Since 2022, England, Wales and Scotland have all introduced bans on various single-use plastic items, though the specific rules differ between nations: England: A ban on single-use plastic plates, trays, bowls, cutlery, and balloon sticks came into force in October 2023. Scotland: A ban on a wider range of single-use plastic items, including cutlery, plates, and polystyrene food containers, has been in place since June 2022. Wales: A similar ban on various single-use plastics has been rolled out in phases since October 2023.
[14] UK Gov Deposit & Return Scheme (2027).
[15] 2023 Event Duration Monitoring Data Publication, Environment Agency, UK Government, (March 2024)

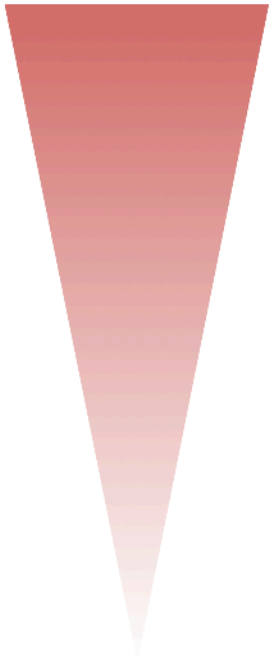
Industry Resources

Much work has been done in the industry to help organisations reach the above goals. For more information and useful resources visit:

- The Vision for Sustainable Events Resource Hub
- Live Music Industry Venues and Entertainment LIVE Green Group
- A Greener Future's Resources
- Music Declares Emergency

Explanatory Notes

1. **Waste Hierarchy**



MINIMISATION AND PREVENTION

- Use less materials in design and manufacture.
- Keep products for longer and re-use.
- Re-use or re-purpose materials instead of sourcing new.
- Use less hazardous materials / materials with lower environmental impacts.

(PREPARING FOR) REUSE

- Check, clean, repair, refurbish – whole items or spare parts.
- Design for disassembly and re-use.

RECYCLING

- Includes composting.
- Not everything that is labelled as 'recyclable' can automatically be recycled at the majority of facilities or if it is in waste streams that are too contaminated - for example if something consists of two or more materials glued together.

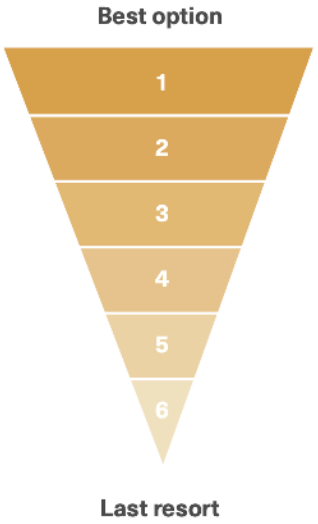
OTHER RECOVERY

- Including anaerobic digestion for organic materials, and incineration with energy recovery / 'Energy from Waste' i.e. where materials are burned and the energy generated is captured.w

'DISPOSAL'

- Landfill and incineration without energy recovery.

2. **Power Hierarchy**



Prevention - Do you actually need power in this location or for this application?

Efficiency - Use less power & use it in a more fuel efficient way

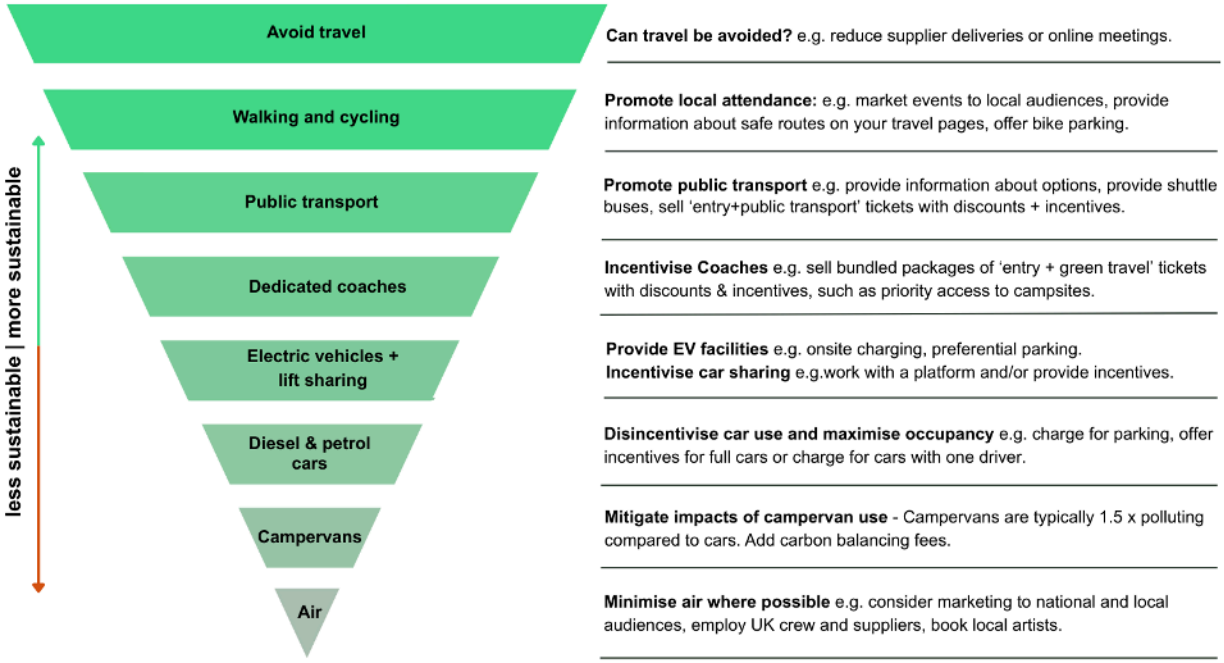
Sourcing - Can you use mains instead of generators? Can you use renewables?

Hybrids- Can the system be backed up or bolstered by battery technology?

Alternative fuels - Can you use HVO or other sustainable fuels?

Diesel-fueled generators - only where nothing else can be used

3. Travel Hierarchy[16]



4. Net Zero Definition

To achieve net zero, businesses must significantly reduce emissions year-on-year, with a target to achieve as close to 90% reduction as possible, and balance unavoidable emissions with climate investments that remove carbon.[17]

5. Best Practice for Carbon (CO_2e) Reporting

Best practice for reporting under the Green Events Code of Practice:

- Before the end of 2026, medium, large and major events and organisations should publish a pathway or plan to achieve a reduction in GHG emissions by 2030, in line with the Paris Agreement's requirement to limit global temperature rises to below 2 degrees, and aim for 1.5 degrees.
- Collaborate with partners, suppliers and customers to drive change across the supply chain and across stakeholders.
- Those who can, should endeavour to collate carbon emissions data and report on an annual basis.

[16] Travel Hierarchy, from onboard:earth (2025).
[17] Based on the Science Based Targets initiative best practice.