

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE FOR STUDENT GROUPS By Lidia Ballocchi Sponsored by Maia Jarvis and Liz Schafer

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Environmental Sustainability – what can we do?

Royal Holloway Students' Union supports around 100 societies and 30+ sports clubs. These student-led groups successfully plan hundreds of events a year. This guide is designed to help student groups be conscious of their carbon footprint and boost their environmental sustainability, with the focus on planning events that reduce or eliminate greenhouse gas production.

Environmental sustainability can be defined as choices that consider the future of mankind to safely co-exist on this planet. Furthermore, carbon footprint can be defined as the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of our activities. Greenhouse gases have far-ranging environmental and health effects. They cause climate change by trapping heat in the atmosphere. This causes extreme weather, air pollution and species extinction. This resource will give committee members the opportunity to be more carbon literate and to act on that knowledge by altering the way they organise events. Being ecofriendly does not have to be expensive – in fact it can be cheaper in the long-term!

Lastly, whilst carbon footprint is the focus of this guide, there are other benefits for student groups who wish to focus on environmental sustainability. For example, at its core, sustainable event planning is about producing less waste. This means waste management also becomes easier and less complicated. Further, student groups that are eco-friendly will create positive brand awareness and attract more members. This is due to the positive environmentally conscious nature of this generation.

This guide offers support on how to become more environmentally sustainable as a student group, particularly in relation to event planning. This is by no means a comprehensive resource, but rather an inspiration to continue developing environmental sustainability in practice!



SOCIETY EVENTS.

Food and drink

Reduce: Calculate the numbers of people attending your event to reasonably plan how much food/drink is required to avoid overbuying and therefore waste. Committees should consider offering excess food/drink to share out at the end of an event for members to take home. Further, non-perishable foods could be donated to food bank drop-off locations on campus!

Reuse: Encourage people to bring their own reusable cups and straws to socials. For example, committees could offer a 'reusable discount' if a member brings their own cup/ straw then they get a free drink!

Recycle: Encourage your attendees to recycle at your event too by making it clear where the recycling stations are and what they're for. ¹Committees can keep an eye on members that are environmentally conscious, considering this factor for 'member of the month' awards.

TOP TIPS

Provide food that is vegetarian/vegan/plant-based

Society events often involve, you guessed it, food! And one of the most common orders is obviously takeaway pizza.

Consider this ... a pepperoni pizza has a carbon footprint of 2.2kg, whilst a 10-inch vegan pizza's footprint is just 1kg!

Moreover, 340g of CO2 are released **per mile** for scooter delivery. Switching to a plantbased option and walking to the pizza place would halve the society's carbon emissions for an event. Don't forget with takeaways to always ask for no cutlery or biodegradable alternatives!

SOCIETY EVENTS.

Single-use plastics

Reduce: Consider having a specific committee member responsible for reducing the presence of single-use plastic at an event. Such as unnecessary carrier bags, plastic bottles and coffee cups. This can be achieved by finding alternatives and planning in advance of any event.

Reuse: Student groups could offer society branded goodies (at Freshers' Fair or as merch) that are an alternative to plastic products. For example, metal bottles, metal straws and reusable tote bags.

Recycle: Eliminating plastic from an event may be unachievable for a student group, however, simply reminding your members to recycle can make a huge difference in terms of carbon footprint!

TOP TIP

If student groups must use single-use plastics, they should consider their options. Such resulting in a positive environmental impact!

Virtual Events

Eliminating plastic from an event may be unachievable for a student group, however, simply reminding your members to recycle can make a huge difference in terms of carbon footprint!

Storage Inn

Student groups should make the most of their access to storage inn in order to store kit and materials. At the start of every academic year, consider doing an inventory check and uploading it on a Google Drive for other student groups to see. This can avoid unnecessary purchases and encourage sharing unused items.



as plastic bottles made from recycled materials which you can recycle again after using them: this results in the CO2 impact per plastic bottle going from 5.4kg to 1.7kg,

¹-<u>https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/recycling-waste</u>

Repurpose

Single-use items can produce a vast amount of waste and be very damaging to the planet. When choosing materials/equipment for your event, try to incorporate recycled and upcycled elements, where possible. For example, ordering society banners/signs/merch without specific dates on them. This would enable the society to reuse these items for future events! Better still, to use whiteboards or chalkboards instead of printed signs, which have a greater carbon footprint and are more difficult to reuse.

Fundraising

Many societies do an annual fundraiser for a charity in need. Student groups could consider raising money for an **environmental cause** or to run events with a focus on sustainability (such as a craft fair). For larger events, societies could pledge to

TOP TIPS

- Research suppliers before committing to choices for your event! Whether in regard to a society banner or takeaway pizza. Find out whether the company has any eco-friendly alternatives or pledge to offset their carbon emissions to do your part!
- When it comes to sourcing what you need for your event, try to do so as locally as possible to cut down on transportation. This also has the added bonus of supporting the local community and small businesses – for example by utilizing zero-waste shops!²



Sports Clubs Events.

Kit and Equipment

- brands for sports kit and equipment, this will ensure quality and help reduce waste!
- repurchase equipment!
- and cut expenses!

Transport

- Essex University, they can share a coach rather than going up separately!
- walking, public transport and even car-sharing with a predetermined pick-up location.
- Taking public transport reduces your carbon footprint dramatically: it takes cars off on access needs.



 Clubs should consider the environmental impact of acquiring sports kit and equipment. Whilst this is a necessary purchase for many, there are more eco-friendly alternatives available. For example, sustainably sourced equipment and kit from recycled materials are becoming more common. It is also important for committees to research ethical Promote the careful management of equipment. For example, loosing footballs at training sessions. These financial and environmental impacts are vast for a sports club, therefore encouraging keeping equipment in good shape helps reduce the need to

Further, encourage club members to pass on kit to new members in order to reuse more

 In terms of weekly training sessions, matches and larger events, carbon emissions from transport are critical. Excess carbon emissions produced by hundreds of single-occupant car journeys can have a harmful impact on the planet, so encourage students to find greener alternatives. Further, clubs travelling to the same place could share a coach to reduce emissions e.g. if both Men's Football and Women's Lacrosse are competing at

• So instead of all driving in separate cars to events, alternatives could include cycling,

the road, resulting in less CO2, and also means that the cars that remain have quicker journeys due to decreased congestion, again resulting in a reduction of CO2! However, remember that for some individuals, taking public transport may not be an option due to

- Further, for larger sporting events, coach/mini-van rental may be necessary. Promote ٠ research into transport companies that are environmentally conscious: they may offset their own emissions or use eco-friendly engines. You could also use an electric Uber or airline companies that release less carbon emissions. Either way, you'll be helping to cut down on the emissions it takes to attend your event. Also use the transport carbon footprint calculator³, to compare multiple travel options.
- Sports clubs could fundraise for charities that plant trees to offset carbon-emissions, based on how many miles you have travelled. If every club pledged to offset their annual travel carbon emissions, this would incentivise committees to look for other transport alternatives.
- Importantly, it's the little differences that add up to really make an impact in terms of carbon emissions. Encouraging members to walk to campus for training together or avoiding driving to the back-gate to park!

Performing Arts Society Events.

Theatre Green Book

With a many performing arts societies hosting large scale events, it is important to consider how to reduce their carbon footprint. These productions are often costly in terms of both money and resources. Therefore, the focus needs to be on small changes throughout the process to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. An important resource for student groups is 'The Theatre Green Book⁴. An initiative that sets standards and guidelines to make productions sustainable both on a small scale and larger performances. It provides a long-term and sustainable commitment to reducing carbon footprint in the performance industry.

Committees of performing arts societies should encourage positive environmental changes and advice from the book when planning events!

Costume and Set

- Incorporate costume earlier in your production development than you usually would. This gives you extra time to prevent making last-minute orders from fast-fashion retailers.
- Hiring costumes and buying second-hand are better alternatives to buying new.
- Be more flexible with costuming options. Where possible, try to be less specific with what is required from the costume. This will give you more options when you are sourcing it.
- Hire set where possible and use reused, repurposed, rented, recycled, or zero carbon

Carbon Literacy Training

Carbon Literacy can be defined as 'an awareness of the carbon dioxide costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual. community and organisational basis.⁵ The Carbon Literacy Project offers everyone a day's worth of Carbon Literacy learning, covering – climate change, carbon footprints, how you can do your bit, and why it's relevant to you and your audience. Carbon Literacy (CL) is aimed at three distinct audiences - Those that live, Those that work, and, Those that study. Carbon Literacy Training is offered at Royal Holloway so keep an eye on your emails for when courses are available to students.

Student groups should encourage committee members to partake in the course, for a deeper understanding of the requirements student groups should consider when hosting events.

TOP TIPS

- would reduce them.
- sharing unused items.

³https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx ⁴https://theatregreenbook.com/ ⁵https://carbonliteracy.com/

Performing arts societies should consider their use of digital resources for their events. For example, online programs, digital invitations and QR codes, instead of paper. Also considering the use of projectors to display information/backgrounds, rather than singleuse items. Whilst this does not completely eliminate carbon emissions of an event it

Performing arts societies should make the most of their access to Storage Inn in order to store props and costumes. At the start of every academic year, consider doing an inventory check and uploading it on a Google Drive for other student groups to see. Alternatively, many performing arts groups have members that overlap, so a group chat would also be appropriate. This could avoid unnecessary purchases and encourage

Other Events.

This guide should act as an inspiration for societies and sports clubs when hosting events. However, there are other events which fall into other categories. For example, large-scale events, boat parties, trips abroad and livestreams. The same principles apply and should just be considered in relation to any unique event.

- Work with sustainable event suppliers for larger events. For instance, you might want all of your event decorations and props to be reusable – so find a supplier who can make that possible! Even consider hiring a sustainable event venue, where part of the service is to offset all of your event's carbon emission.
- For events with judges or outside staff, strategies could include to return their lanyards or badge covers after an event so they can be used again.
- For media outlet societies, ideas could focus on the radio/TV station having an ٠ environmental sustainability segment. Printed media outlets could investigate the environmental impact of their physical copies and use recycled paper, for example.
- Calculate the carbon footprint of your event then attempt to minimise it by checking the environmental section of transport company websites for carbon offsetting pledges.
- Explore food catering options focus on supporting local businesses and reducing waste. Provide plant-based options and ask about dietary requirements in advance to reduce carbon impact and waste.



Resources.

How Bad are Bananas?: The Carbon Footprint of Everything by Mike Berners-Lee. Carbon footprint calculator for transport: https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx WWF lifestyle carbon footprint calculator: https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/ Offset carbon footprint values: https://bulb.co.uk/carbon-calculator/ Theatre in Green: https://theatregreenbook.com/ Sustainable theatre practices examples: sustainable-approaches-to-theatre-and-performance-making.pdf (royalholloway.ac.uk) Carbon Literacy Training: https://www.rovalhollowav.ac.uk/research-and-teaching/departments-and-schools/dramatheatre-and-dance/about-us/environmental-sustainability/carbon-literacy-training/ https://carbonliteracy.com/ Recycling: https://www.recyclenow.com/recycle-an-item Local recycling: https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/recycling-waste Local Plastic-Free Shop: https://www.zerojoes.co.uk/ **RHUL Volunteering:** https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/recycling-waste Student-led education charity focusing on sustainability:

https://www.sos-uk.org/





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