

SUSTAINABLE EVENTS GUIDE



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Welcome to Manchester City Council's Sustainable Events Guide

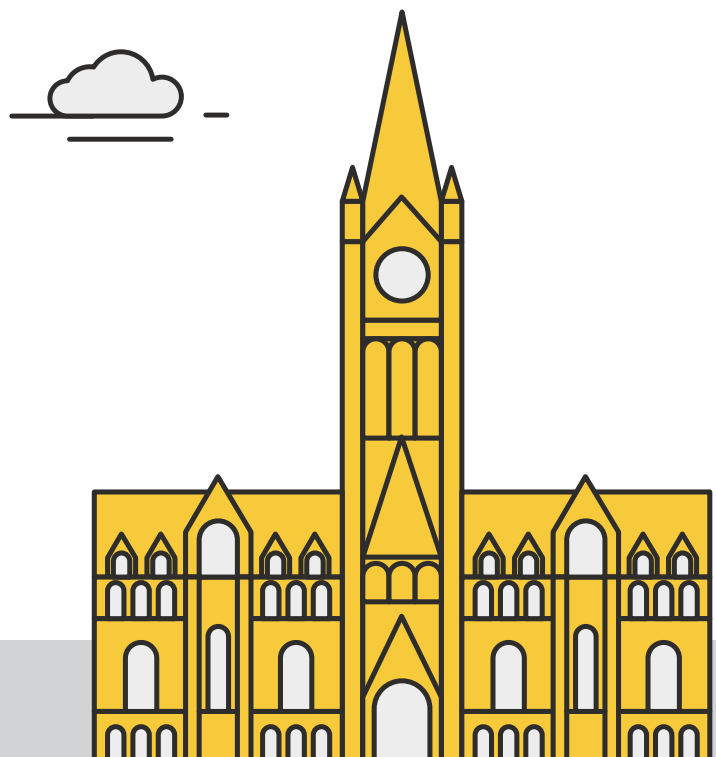
Manchester City Council's mission is to make Manchester a healthy, green, socially just city where everyone can thrive. Our target is to become a zero-carbon city by 2038. You can read more about this ambition [here](#), and read the Council's 2025–2030 action plan [here](#).

This guidance helps event organisers to consider how best to plan and deliver low-carbon, resource-efficient events, based on the information in the Green Events Code of Practice (GECOP) tool you may have been asked to complete. It sets out practical actions across all eight key areas of the tool – Energy, Waste, Food and Drink, Travel, Water, Governance, Influence, and Accessibility – and explains how to measure and report impact using simple tools.

The GECOP is available to download at: [**Code of Practice – Vision for Sustainable Events**](#).

If you organise events in the city, use this guide to review your activity and play your part in helping Manchester reach its zero-carbon goal. It is not expected that you can implement every action in this document.

Instead, use it to review your event plans and identify the areas in your control where you can make the biggest impact.



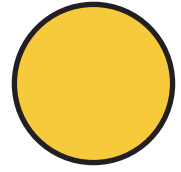
Eight key areas to consider for a sustainable event

1. Energy – reduce energy demand and eliminate emissions from energy use

1. Always use mains power connection if available.
2. Where generators are unavoidable, avoid fossil-fuel generators and opt for battery or hybrid equipment. If fuel powered, use HVO/ renewable fuels.
3. Use LED lighting, implementing switch-off schedules/timers for non-operational periods.
4. Write a power-usage plan, and monitor usage across your event to check for areas where efficiencies can be made.



2. Materials and waste – prevent waste first, then promote reuse and recycle

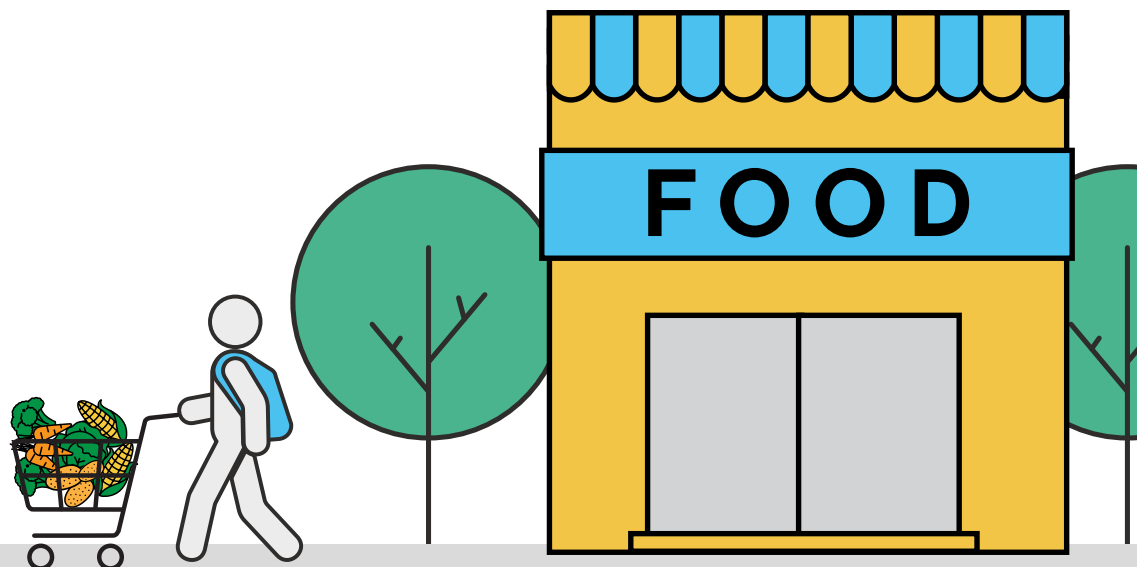


1. Consider potential waste at the very start of your event planning – do you need all the materials, food, merchandise, paper etc? Preventing waste from happening in the first place is key.
2. After this, apply the waste hierarchy to everything you use: reduce – reuse – recycle – recover – dispose.
3. Your event must comply with **Simpler Recycling legislation**. This requires the separation of recyclable materials, food waste and residual waste before collection, and includes waste generated by staff, traders and attendees. Smaller organisations have until April 2027 to comply, but all events are encouraged to adopt compliant waste systems now. This might include providing clearly labelled recycling bins for attendees or implementing back-of-house sorting systems.
4. Plan for food redistribution where possible – for example **Mad Dogs Homeless Project** will take leftover packaged food, **Open Kitchen** will take raw/unprepped food, and **Eat Well MCR** will take hot food from a buffet.
5. Eliminate all single-use plastic in line with the **Plastic Free Greater Manchester Pledge**.
6. Integrate a reusable cup scheme with all drink vendors – Manchester Markets cups can be borrowed free of charge to enable this.
7. Encourage audiences to bring refillable water bottles, and provide free **refill points**/point to refill points near your event site.
8. Ask your waste contractor to separate materials and provide data on how much waste is produced and recycled. Use this information to improve processes next time.

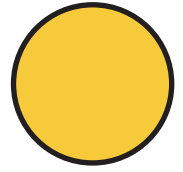


3. Food and drink – lower the carbon footprint of food and drink while maintaining quality and affordability

1. Offer a high proportion of low-carbon meals (ie. vegetarian or vegan, no red meat) and consider setting targets (ie. 50/50 plant-based options).
2. Think about carbon labelling for menus, for instance using **Klimato**. Carbon labelling allows customers to see the environmental impact of the food they are eating, and can lead to lower impact choices.
3. Use local suppliers and seasonal ingredients.
4. Avoid disposable serveware, and use reusables where possible.
5. Write a sustainable food policy for traders and suppliers.



4. Travel – reduce emissions from audience, supplier, and staff travel



1. Encourage audiences to use active or public transport to get to your event – travel information at the point of ticket purchase and on your website should place these options before any mention of car travel. Link to Transport for Greater Manchester’s **journey planner**, which shows the carbon impact of journeys.
2. Provide cycle parking guidance, and extra bike stands if feasible.
3. Consider incentivising active and public transport with special entry times/points, and discounts on entry to food and drink vendors.
4. Survey your audience to understand how they have travelled to your event.
5. Limit parking spaces to discourage private car travel – communicate this to your audience.
6. Encourage low-carbon transport for performers and staff (ie. train over plane where possible).



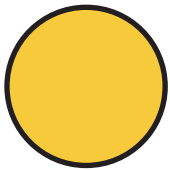
5. Water – use mains water efficiently

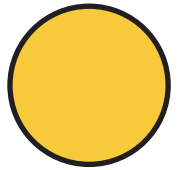
1. Provide access to mains water for participants and audiences.
2. Write a water conservation/saving plan for your event.
3. Monitor and measure water usage.
4. Do not allow the sale of single-use water bottles – encourage audiences and participants to bring their own water bottles, and provide free refill points.
5. Where it is not possible to use reusable cups, only sell drinks in containers that are widely recyclable (such as cans).



6. Governance – manage your sustainability plan effectively

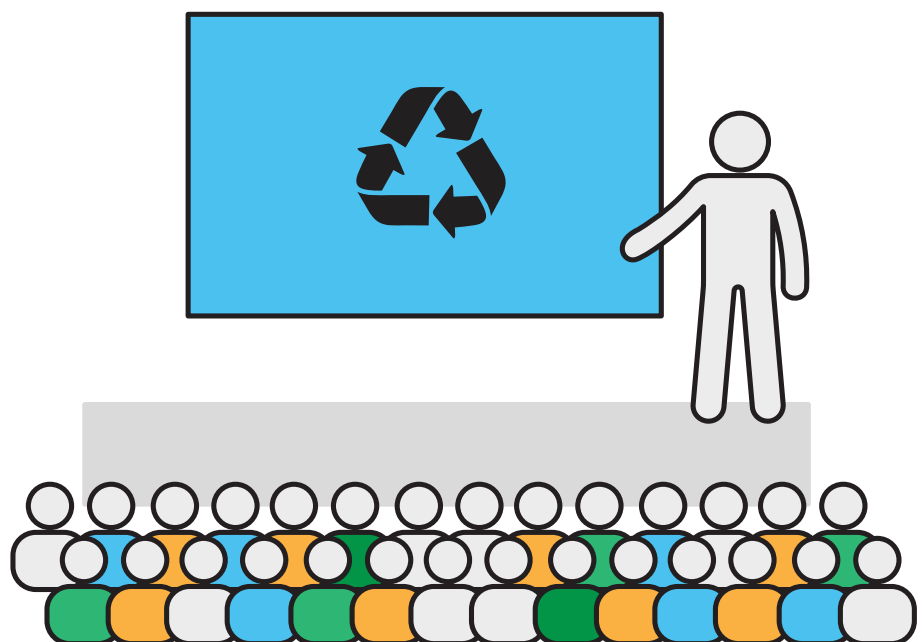
1. Appoint a sustainability lead for your event.
2. Write a sustainability policy/plan for your event. Share it with stakeholders and suppliers, and identify team members who will be responsible for its implementation.
3. Monitor and measure waste, energy, water and travel, and report on them after the event. Use the findings to identify areas of improvement for next time.
4. Share and celebrate any success stories with stakeholders and suppliers.





7. Positive influence – use your event to engage your audience on sustainability issues

1. Showcase your sustainability initiatives to audiences and participants at your event.
2. Share positive stories with stakeholders, suppliers, the media and audiences. Share areas where improvements can be made next time, ie. 'We are going to aim for zero diesel generators onsite'.
3. Programme sustainability content at your event – can the event involve local environmental community projects and charities? Can you raise funds for them, contribute to their goals, or give them a pitch at the event?
4. Encourage your traders and suppliers to identify where they can reduce their environmental impact so the event has a positive knock-on effect further down the supply chain.



8. Accessibility – ensure your event is accessible to everyone



1. Appoint someone to be responsible for delivering accessibility initiatives at your event.
2. Ensure all infrastructure and areas of the event are accessible to audiences and participants alike (ie. thoroughfares, toilets, wristband collection points, viewing platforms etc).
3. Make sure signage is designed with accessibility in mind – large clear fonts and accessible heights.
4. Train all staff and traders on accessible best practice.
5. Consult disability groups on your plans and base them on lived experiences.
6. Ensure accessibility information is available on your website/at point of ticket purchase.





Measuring your impact and progress

GECOP toolkit

Event organisers in Manchester are asked to complete the GECOP toolkit and a short post-event data survey as part of event planning and delivery.

- Events over 1,000 attendees: You will be sent the GECOP toolkit by your event organiser or Council contact for completion and return.
- Events under 1,000 attendees: You are encouraged to use the GECOP toolkit for your own planning and learning. You can download the tool for free at **GECOP Phase II: Toolkit.**
- The Council will also send you a post-event survey to capture any data you have collected around actual waste, water and energy use, food and drink, and travel. Please complete as much of this as you have data for (partial data is still valuable).

Carbon footprinting

We encourage organisers to estimate the carbon footprint of their event. A simple estimate is acceptable, as the purpose is to identify priorities and improve next time. Tools such as **Julie's Bicycle's Creative Climate Tools** can provide a straightforward first step to understand and manage your event's environmental impacts.

Contact and support

For queries, accessibility requests, or to obtain the GECOP online toolkit, contact your Manchester City Council or Manchester Active event contact, or email our Zero Carbon Events Specialist at **richard.walker@manchester.gov.uk**



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