



**Shannon Region**  
CONFERENCE & SPORTS BUREAU

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## A Practical Guide to running Green Meetings and Events

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## Preface

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This guide outlines top tips and best practices to help organisations run events of all kinds in as environmentally sustainable a way as possible.

It provides simple, effective advice to help organisations take action to reduce carbon emissions.

Implementing sustainable practices can reduce costs, improve brand reputation, increase attendee engagement, and help everyone in the fight against the climate crisis.

# Table of Contents

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Preface	2
Table of Contents	3
Introduction	4
Energy Management	5
Waste Management	6
Food Waste	7
Transport	8
Carbon Offsetting	9
Biodiversity	10
Checklist	11

## Introduction

While events are a great opportunity to bring people together to network, share knowledge, learn, inspire change and innovation they can also be particularly carbon and waste intensive and with the ever-increasing focus on the environment across the world, it is not surprising that the meeting and events sector has come under scrutiny.

There are 20,000 people employed in Business Tourism in Ireland and it accounted for a €77m exchequer return in 2019.

## Purpose of this Guide

This guide will cover practical steps to tackle areas of environmental impact in the events industry, including venue selection, energy, waste, food, transport, and biodiversity.

## Who this Guide is for

This guide is designed for use by any business involved in planning and/or running a meeting, conference, or event in Ireland. This will range from conference organisers, venues (including hotels), accommodation providers, catering companies, entertainment/activity providers, audio visual/IT companies, and transport providers.

It is a lot more difficult to liaise and deliver a green meeting or event if your own business does not adhere to best environmental practice. When greening your own business, the key is to involve everyone and explain to them why you are doing it, what the outcomes are going to be and how they can help. Well-trained staff are the face of your business and can be ambassadors to take your initiatives beyond your business.

Remember 'you don't have to be great to start but you have to start to be great'.

## Energy Management



When identifying potential venues for your event, it is important to consider the energy efficiency of the building itself. The choice of event venue will to a great extent determine the overall environmental impacts of the event. However, one of the main impacts can often be caused by carbon emissions associated with transportation to and from the venue so location and access are essential factors to consider when choosing

the venue. Preference should be given to choosing a low carbon, energy efficient building which is conveniently located and accessible by public transport. Well managed buildings should feature LED lighting, an energy efficient design and low carbon heating with energy monitoring systems.

When choosing outdoor venues for events such as festivals and concerts, consider whether you can meet localised energy demand through renewable energy generation. For example, some festivals manage to run on 100% renewable energy by reducing demand where possible, specifying energy efficient equipment. Engage with your event production and audio-visual team about the energy which will be used by screens, lighting, and speakers. Consider installing temporary solar panels and generators to meet this energy demand.

### Case Study

The Falls Hotel & Spa in Co. Clare became one of Ireland's first hotels to be run on hydroelectricity with the installation of a water turbine.

The Falls Hotel have reduced their electricity consumption by 830,000 kWh in the 12 months since installing a water turbine. This means a 20kilowatt water turbine is providing the Falls Hotel with 100% of its power.

This has also reduced the businesses carbon emissions by an estimated 550 tonnes - the equivalent of offsetting three return trips, by car, to the moon.

The project took 2 years to complete, and the benefits were noticed almost instantly.

# Waste Management

There are many ways excessive waste can be avoided at your event. It is a good idea to start by reviewing your current and/ or expected waste streams and recycling practices, and having discussions with your suppliers, contractors, staff, and attendees.

## Tips for Meeting and Event Planners to help manage Waste

Waste Source	Solution
Marketing Materials	It is a well-known fact that large amounts of printed materials are generated for most meetings and events – including invitations, promotional materials, agendas, and participant lists etc. Consider the entire lifecycle of any promotional materials. Use technology such as event apps or web pages to disseminate information rather than having paper print outs. If printing is necessary – print double-sided, using recycled paper and vegetable ink.
Marketing Collateral	Do not provide individual paper and pens on every table at your event instead have them on a side table so anyone who really needs it can access it. Any branded materials, such as pens, folders, etc, should be made of recycled, biodegradable and sustainably sourced materials.
Water	Provide drinking water in jugs rather than plastic bottles and make water fountains available and encourage attendees to bring their own water bottles to refill during the event.
Recycling	Ensure there are easily accessible waste and recycling points available throughout your event venue with clear labels highlighting what can and cannot be recycled. If possible, collecting food waste for composting is a great way to reduce waste ending up in landfill.
Drinks	If hot or cold beverages will be served at the event, opt for reusable drinks containers. Do not promote single use items like take away cups, promote keep cups instead. You could offer discounts for attendees who bring their own cups. Such a scheme could ultimately result in cost savings by reducing clean-up, waste management and collection costs.

## Food Waste

Currently, an estimated one third of all food produced for human consumption is wasted. In Ireland, we generate approximately 1 million tonnes of food waste every year. To minimise food wastage at your event, plan your catering carefully in advance, talk to your catering team or external food suppliers about choosing local, organic and seasonal produce, even providing vegetarian dishes and fair-trade products will reduce the environmental impact and benefit communities. Buffets can be particularly wasteful so favour plated dishes instead. Ask your attendees for their food preferences ahead of the event and the number of delegates should be confirmed as precisely as possible. Also, try to team up with local food banks and projects in the local community like [Too Good To Go](#) and [Food Cloud](#) for any unavoidable food waste.

### Tips for Meeting and Event Planners when choosing the catering for your conference or event

Choose catering companies that have a sustainability certification

Choose local catering companies to reduce transportation miles

Choose catering companies that promote the use of local, seasonal, and organic produce

Avoid the use of disposable items (cups, plates, cutlery etc.)

Avoid the use of single-use and single-portion items (sauces, jams etc.)

Ensure all sugar, tea and coffee is not individually packaged. Bowls with sugar cubes and flasks of tea and coffee are favourable.

Ensure all food at catering stations is not individually wrapped in plastic.



# Transport

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Attendees should be given clear instructions on how to travel to your event, with public transport options highlighted above driving.

Promote the use of public transport to participants by making information available e.g. routes, timetables etc. in advance of the event.

Explore how you can support delegates to arrive together, for example by providing shuttle buses for travel between the accommodation provider, conference venue and/or local train station or airport.

Identify bicycle hire opportunities and make this information available to delegates and ensure there are easily accessible and safe places to leave bicycles.

Implementing a car-pool scheme can be a good way to help attendees share the costs of getting to and from the venue.

The use of electric vehicles is rapidly increasing globally. If possible, ensure your venue has charging points for visitors.



# Carbon Offsetting

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Consumers are becoming more and more aware of their carbon footprint and are starting to look for ways to reduce their impact on the planet. Carbon offsetting enables anyone to reduce their carbon footprint, by supporting projects, that either reduce or off-set carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere.

For an event to be considered “carbon neutral,” the balance of any carbon emissions caused that cannot be eliminated must have been offset against a measured carbon footprint.

Committing to carbon neutrality includes:

- Measuring carbon emissions
- Reducing these as much as possible
- Offsetting any remaining, unavoidable emissions.

Offsets should be obtained through reputable sources which have been independently verified or accredited, such as the Gold Standard. You may wish for your event to be independently accredited as Carbon Neutral. Benefits of the Carbon Neutral Certification include enhanced brand reputation, credible communication of environmental responsibility, and increased attendee engagement and loyalty through being associated with an internationally recognised standard.

## General Rule

1. Establish your baseline footprint



2. Reduce



3. Offset (with a certified partner)  
Only offset what you cannot avoid producing

## Biodiversity

Event planners should consider the local environment, biodiversity, and nature preservation impacts of their events, as well as taking into account any potentially harmful longer-term impacts (post event)

## Case Studies

How **Adare Manor** are promoting Biodiversity

### TREE PLANTING, FLORA & FAUNA

Adare Manor manages 840 acres of land and thousands of trees that support an abundance of flora and fauna across the resort. Since 2016, four hundred mature trees and thousands of saplings have been planted. In 2022, they plan to plant in excess of three hundred new trees across the resort.

### CONSTRUCTION OF NEW WETLANDS

Two new wetlands have been constructed on the golf course mitigating climate change through land based carbon storage, further aiding to water quality improvement and wildlife inhabitation.

### ALL IRELAND POLLINATOR PLAN

Pollinators are indispensable to the ecosystem and the success of crops in Ireland. In the spring of 2017, Adare Manor welcomed seven hives of honeybees to the estate. Throughout spring, summer, and autumn, the honeybees will roam the estate foraging for nectar which is further cut into raw honey for guests. The raw estate honey can be purchased in the in-house and online boutique.

### INLAND FISHERIES IRELAND

Adare Manor supports "Inland Fisheries Ireland" with fish monitoring and river quality initiatives on the River Mague which runs through the resort.

### **Fitzgeralds Woodlands House Hotel and Spa**

Fitzgeralds Woodlands House Hotel & Spa a family run 4-star hotel on 40 acres of private organic grounds in the historic village of Adare are trailblazers when it comes to investing in environmental initiatives that reduce the resort's carbon footprint. The resort has its own well and waste-water treatment plant on-site, which means it is entirely self-sufficient.

An organic garden was created in the grounds of the hotel to supply the kitchen with the freshest and most natural ingredients possible. Shortly after the land was converted into a certified

organic farm, produce from Mary's Organic Garden and the farm can be found on the breakfast table, in a host of dishes at Timmy Macs Bistro, as drink ingredients and garnishes served in Dicks Bar and as the inspiration behind Fielding's of Adare. All food-waste is composted and used for Mary's Organic Garden and the organic farm, both of which are home to trees planted as part of the resort's carbon offset programme.

# Checklist

Action	Completed
Have you set environmental targets for energy and waste?	
Have you committed to Carbon Neutrality?	
Have you chosen a venue, taking into consideration the energy efficiency and location of the building?	
Have you explored renewable energy for your venue?	
Have you addressed the waste sources identified in the section on waste? (Page 6)	
Have you considered the food options which will be on offer, and taken steps to limit meat and dairy provided?	
Are you working with your suppliers to ensure best environmental practice throughout the supply chain?	

