



HOW TO MAKE YOUR EVENT A GREEN ONE

Advice on environmental good
practice for Festivals & Cultural Events

Introduction

Festivals are a celebration of creativity and diversity and have an immensely positive impact on the cultural wealth of Ireland. Every year, nearly 700 events occur across the country, from major music and theatre festivals to angling festivals, oyster festivals and parades. They provide a platform for the arts, sports, food, history, politics and entertainment and celebrate a wealth of lifestyles and passions.



But because of their nature, festivals also have the potential to impact negatively on the environment. A gathering of thousands of people at a festival naturally generates waste – empty bottles, used paper plates, plastic cutlery and glasses, packaging, unwanted food and drink, waste water, cartons, plastic bags and general waste. Festivals can also negatively impact on the environment in other ways, from damage to plant and birdlife to pollution of rivers or increased carbon dioxide from additional car travel.

Across the world, more and more festivals are being 'greened'. Many of the larger festivals now have environmental policies in place, and are looking for new ways of becoming more environmentally friendly. If you are the organiser of a festival, these guidelines will assist you in minimising the event's impact on the environment. There are certain mandatory obligations that you must fulfil, but there are also many ways that you can 'green' your festival, and in the process educate and inspire your stakeholders and attendees. Most people will be pleased to be associated with an event that is environmentally friendly and you will find that your festival will gain support and admiration for doing so.

These guidelines can be used by organisers of festivals and events of all sizes and descriptions.

PART 1

Mandatory obligations

Waste Management Act 1996

Organisers of festivals and events should be aware of the Waste Management Act of 1996. The objective of this act is to provide a legal framework to ensure that the holding, transportation, recovery and disposal of waste do not cause environmental pollution.

Litter Pollution Act 1997

The Litter Pollution Act has specific references to the management of waste at festivals and events. In particular, event organisers should note the following sections:

Litter control at major events

The promoters or organisers of major events are required to ensure that they have litter control measures in place at the venue and in the surrounding vicinity before, during and after the event. This task can be undertaken by the local authority but the promoter/organiser must bear the costs involved.

Mobile food outlets

Operators of mobile food outlets selling fast food or beverages or other outlets such as those selling farm produce are obliged to provide suitable litter bins in the vicinity of their outlets. Also, they must clean up any litter arising from the operation of their outlets within a radius of 100 metres of their outlet.

Posters and signs

The law forbids the putting up of posters/signs on poles or other structures in public places unless you have the written permission of the owner of the pole or other structure in advance of putting up the posters/signs and requires that an article or advertisement must carry the name and address of the person:

- who is promoting or arranging the meeting or event being advertised, or
- in any other case, on whose behalf the article or advertisement is being exhibited.

Advertising flyers

The placing of advertising leaflets on car windscreens is illegal. If you are proposing to distribute advertising leaflets in the street, you should first check with the local authority to see if they have introduced any local litter restrictions, which they are entitled to do.

Other legislation

Many Local Authorities have now introduced by-laws for beaches within their administrative areas. Organisers of events that are going to take place on or near a beach have to apply to the Local Authority for an appropriate permit. Items such as car-parking, nuisance factor to other beach users, litter control would also apply.

Waste collectors collecting any type of waste material including sewage, recyclables, residual waste, construction and demolition waste must have a license for the relevant county. You also need to know what facility they are taking the waste material to and if this facility or storage area has a license. This has become a very important issue in recent years.

Sewage control from porta-loos also have to be considered. Again, the operator must have a license to collect the waste from the relevant Local Authority.

Waste presentation by-laws have also been introduced in many counties by Local Authorities. Check to see if they apply in your county.

As a general rule, all festival and event organisers should contact the Environmental Officer and/or the Litter Warden in their Local Authority at the very outset and should work closely with them throughout.

Source: Litter Law in Ireland, Citizens information online.



PART 2

Environmental good practice guidelines

Public festivals and events have the potential to negatively impact the environment in several ways. These include increased carbon production, impact on animal and plant species, water pollution, and generation of waste.

But there are many ways in which festival organisers can limit and prevent these impacts. The following section sets out a range of simple steps that can be taken to ensure an environmentally friendly and successful festival.

The first section is a step-by-step general guide of some of the most important steps that can be taken to 'green' a festival or event. The second section offers a more detailed checklist of specific actions that can be taken. Many of the measures listed here are easily achievable while others take more effort, but organisers can decide which are the most feasible and worthwhile for their particular event.

These guidelines have been designed to be used by organisers of large scale camping festivals, multi-day city festivals, one-day local festivals or one-off parades and carnivals.

Step-by-step guidelines to 'greening' your festival or event

1 Venue and transport

When choosing a venue make sure it is accessible by public transport or that additional transfer services from the nearest train and bus stations as well as from all major hubs can be arranged. Offer joint ticket and travel packages to encourage people to travel to the event by public transport and encourage people to leave their cars at home on the event web-site and promotion material. Facilitate a 'car-sharing' service and offer 'green-tags' for sale for attendees to offset their carbon impact from their journey.

Provide support to venues that are already environmentally friendly and use your event to encourage hotels or organisations that your event will be supporting to go green, offering increased publicity to those who do (see www.failteireland.ie/performanceplus for details on how venues can become 'green').

Consider the potential impact of the festival/event on the natural surroundings: consider water quality, bird and plant-life and avoid any particularly sensitive areas. Think about the noise level of your event and who this might affect.

2 Commitment

Gain commitment from all involved – (sponsors, event and site owners, vendors, performers, and attendees and crucially, staff). Tell them why and how the event will be 'greening' this year, and discuss with them well in advance how they can contribute. Brief the vendors well in advance, specifying what is expected of them, e.g. that all food vendor service supplies and in-house supplies must be re-usable, biodegradable or recyclable. Give as much advice and lead time and as possible, provide them with lists of what can and cannot be used, and offer product supplier contact details.

3 Advertising

Having an event that diverts waste and is environmentally friendly can help attract both sponsors and attendees. Issue media releases and advertising about your environmental commitment, and use your website, official programmes, relevant magazines, and word of mouth to promote it. Run a poster campaign on the shuttle service to the event. Use email rather than mail-outs to communicate with your participants and attendees, and always use environmentally friendly papers and inks when printing.

4 Identify and engage contractors

Service contractors include companies offering cleaning services, bins, liquid waste collection and material recovery and separation. Composting and recycling services will be crucial, as the bulk of 'waste' is food stuffs and the supplies used to consume them. Establish what your needs are, and consider what you are being offered when choosing a contractor. Make sure that you will be provided with quantitative information that will enable you to establish the amount and weight of material recycled and composted, the rate of contamination and where this occurs.

5 Supply free drinking water

Plan to make water freely available at your event in order to cut out the many thousand plastic water bottles that are generated. Set up water refill stations, and encourage vendors to have jugs of water available at stalls. Sell high quality or stainless steel water bottles at the entrance and throughout the event (where appropriate). In all press and advertising, tell your attendees to bring their own water bottles. Ask that vendors do not sell water in plastic bottles.



Walled Towns Day, Fethard

6 Site plan

The site plan should include:

- The correct number and placement of eco-stations or recycling and composting bins;
- The best positions for signage to these facilities;
- The location of food and beverage vendors that will require waste collection;
- Access lanes for service vehicles such as equipment suppliers, vendors and waste services contractors.

7 Signage

For the greening of your event to be successful, you need the full participation of attendees. Carefully plan the number and position of signs that will be needed so that attendees always know where the nearest water stations and recycling and composting bins are. Use multi-media signage such as banners, posters and video screens. At the eco-stations and bins provide clear signs to help people sort out their compost, recycling and rubbish. Make public announcements and explain the system in your programme.

8 Monitoring

During the event ensure that your 'green team' of enthusiastic volunteers and staff are monitoring the eco-stations and helping people to correctly deposit their waste. Provide them with long armed grabbing devices so that they can retrieve litter. The green team are responsible for exchanging and emptying bins, adjusting bin locations as necessary and keeping water flowing at water stations. They should also monitor vendors to ensure that they are separating waste types and using only permitted materials.

The peak flow of different waste types will alter during the course of the event (cardboard and paper will be produced in bulk before the event starts as vendors set up, while food and liquid, including sewage, wastes will be disposed of at the end of the day or the event). Ensure that the collection or swap over of bins corresponds with these demand peaks.

9 Clean up and data collection

Check that vendors have left their sites as clean and clear as possible. Provide staff or trained volunteers with bags, gloves etc. and get them to retrieve any recyclable or compostable material. Non-recyclable and non-biodegradable material should be removed from the site and disposed of as general waste.

Collect information from the contractors on the waste materials and calculate the number of patrons at the event, the approximate number of drink containers collected, the amount of cardboard and paper collected, the amount of material composted and the amount of material you prevented going to landfill.

This data should be reported to sponsors, site owners, event owners, local newspapers and Fáilte Ireland. And finally, remember to celebrate your success! The following is a selection of initiatives that can be taken by festival/event organisers to minimise the impact on the environment. The type of festival or event will largely determine the appropriateness or practicality of introducing these measures.

Green checklist for your festival

The following is a selection of initiatives that can be taken by festival/event organisers to minimise the impact on the environment.

Transport

- Accessibility by public transport should be a central issue when choosing a venue.
- Arrange for public shuttle services from the nearest bus and train stations and major hubs, or establish park and ride facilities.
- Choose vehicles with hybrid engines where possible.
- Offer and promote joint ticket and travel packages to encourage people to travel to the event by public transport.
- On the event website and promotional material give directions to the venue by public transport and encourage visitors to 'leave the car at home'.
- Offer 'green-tags' for attendees to buy to offset the carbon of their journey.

Printed materials and paper

- Use electronic advertising, promotion and registration whenever possible.
- Contract with a paper supplier or printer who uses recycled or environmentally friendly paper environmentally friendly inks.
- Always use double-sided copying and printing.
- Limit the use of glossy paper to applications where it significantly improves the publication (e.g. high-quality photography) and never use fluorescent paper (it is toxic to make, non-recyclable and toxic to incinerate).
- Use mailing labels with water-based adhesives.
- Use reusable or recyclable signs, or paint on canvas or hemp.
- Ask sponsors and others who provide printed materials to ensure they are on recycled, non-fluorescent and non-glossy paper.

- If there are plastic name tag holders, collect these for reuse, with collection boxes at all registration and exit areas. You can hold a prize draw from the recycled badges.
- If there are speakers at the event, encourage them to provide electronic copies of handouts and post any visual presentations on the event website.
- Limit the production of flyers and posters by publishing a comprehensive event brochure.
- Where flyers are necessary, encourage participants to use recycled/environmentally friendly and non-glossy paper.

Food service supplies, food and beverage vending

- For the greenest avenue, arrange reusable food service supplies with a deposit system and have dishwashing facilities at all sections of the event.
- If food vendors or caterers are participating, brief them as early as possible on what is expected of them. Make it a requirement in your vendor application or initial communications that their food service supplies must be re-usable or biodegradable and provide them with contact details for appropriate product suppliers. This action will form a large part of the success in greening an event.
- Set up free water refill stations, and sell high quality or stainless steel water bottles. In all press and advertising, tell your attendees to bring their own water bottles. Ask vendors not to sell water in plastic bottles and encourage them to provide free jugs of water where possible.
- Make sure there is at least one vendor on site selling re-usable mugs, dishware and cutlery and ask food vendors to encourage the use of these rather than automatically giving out disposable containers.
- All glass bottles, plastic bottles, and aluminium cans should be collected and recycled.
- Require that vendors use hydrocarbon freezers instead of HFCs or HCFCs.
- Ensure that clean burn generators are used.
- Require that your food vendors serve condiments in serving containers and not in individual packets.
- Ask food and drink vendors to avoid non-edible garnishes.
- Ask that any washing up liquids or soaps require that vendors bring in are environmentally friendly.



- Where possible, donate surplus food to local shelters, soup kitchens, etc. Let vendors know about any donation programmes in place.
- Locate sustainable and environmentally-friendly food vendors and encourage the sale of organic, locally produced and fair-trade foods – offer discounts or additional publicity.

Waste recycling

Front of house

Front and back of house will generate different kinds and volumes of waste. Front of house waste can usually be limited to two main types: drink containers and biodegradables (including cardboard and paper).

- Draw up a waste plan that considers the number of bins, the placement of bins, the type of bins, and how they are presented. Each of these factors influences how people will use them and whether they will use them correctly. The waste plan should also consider signage, vehicle routes and bin emptying and collection schedules. Make sure everyone who needs to be familiar with these has been properly briefed.
- Create eco-stations with facilities for composting and recycling facilities.
- The different bin types should be placed together so that patrons face identical choices at each location. The bins should be easily identifiable and consistent in appearance. This can be done by fitting the bins with bin caps.
- While front of house bins should be located near food and drink vendors, disposal does not always happen close to the point of purchase. For optimal material recovery recycling and composting bins should also be located:
 - At event entry points;
 - Near high-traffic areas;
 - At disposal points such as toilets, exit and entry points, and car parks;
 - At accessible points that coincide with movement of patrons and catch their attention;
 - Between 3–14 metres from the next nearest bin.
- Monitor bin usage and adjust their positions as necessary.

- Make clear signage for bins so that attendees are not confused by what goes where. It is best to show what is compostable with the physical items attached to the bins.
- Products such as disposable nappies must be dealt with separately. By providing a baby changing facility with designated bins for nappies and other related items, the waste is captured at source while patrons with young children will feel catered for. Advertising the facility will encourage patrons to use it.
- Cigarette butts pose a threat to the environment if washed into waterways. Consider providing special purpose containers for cigarette butts and promoting their availability.
- In overnight festivals, make a collection point at the end of the festival for unwanted camping equipment and sleeping bags that can be donated to charities.

Back of house

Back of house waste differs from front of house in both type of waste and peak volumes and timing. Back of house recyclables and biodegradables will require bins, but additional facilities will also need to be provided for the collection of cardboard, paper and liquid waste (this mainly comprises cooking oils and grey water such as washing-up water).

- Find out what the composting hauler will not accept and require that vendors do not sell these items (e.g. coconut shells, mylar-lined drink containers etc.).
- Locate bins within easy access of vendors or provide vendors with easy to use composting, recycling and regular bags/bins.
- Arrange for provision and collection of appropriately sized drums for liquid waste and inform vendors that all liquid wastes must be disposed of in the drums provided, as specified in their contract.
- Be aware that peak volume of cardboard is likely to occur at the set up of the event.
- Designate a special area back of house for placement of cardboard and assign staff to collect material as it is generated.
- Communicate clearly with your recycling, composting and waste hauling services to emphasize that you need to know the total weights of all that is being taken away from the event.

Green checklist for your festival

The green team

- Recruit and train enthusiastic volunteers and paid staff that are responsible for keeping the eco-stations sorted, educating attendees as to which bin to use and why, emptying bins and adjusting bin locations as necessary.
- The green team should be prepared to stay on top of every station for the duration of the event. Once a bin becomes contaminated with incorrect waste, it can quickly end up filled with incorrect items as people ignore signage and instead look into bins to see what should go in.
- Provide them with long armed grabbing devices so they can retrieve waste.
- If there are water refill stations, the green team should also be responsible for keeping those full and flowing.
- The green team should also monitor vendors to check that they are separating waste types and using only permitted materials and that they leave their sites as clear as possible.
- After the event, the green team will retrieve any recycled or compostable material and dispose of general waste.
- Ensure that the green team have been well-prepared and trained and that they are well co-ordinated.
- Develop a checklist for festival staff and volunteers before the start of the festival to ensure good practices are being adhered to.

Energy

- Investigate using cleaner-burning bio-diesel fuel or solar power for stage generators.
- Request the use of renewable energy from your electricity supplier.
- Estimate the carbon dioxide emissions arising from the festival, and make an offsetting compensatory investment in a suitable climate change reduction scheme.

Toilets

- Ensure there are enough portable or compost toilets/urinals to avoid queues and discourage people from urinating in hedges and waterways.
- Plan where these should be placed to be easily available, and sign them well.
- Ask people not to urinate except in the facilities provided and explain the danger to the environment of this on signage and in pre-press. Position additional toilets near areas that are particularly vulnerable.

- Make sure the toilets are emptied and cleaned at regular intervals to encourage usage.
- Consider the use of female urinals with 'P-mates' to reduce queues.
- If you are providing soaps ensure that these are environmentally-friendly.
- If you are providing hand-drying facilities, use either recycled content paper towels or cloth towels that are changed frequently.
- Make sure that the disposal of sewage waste is appropriately licenced.

Parades

- Encourage groups contributing to the parade to use natural materials where possible.
- Make a collection point at the end of the route for unwanted costumes and props to be donated to charities or schools and assign a staff member to manage this.
- Encourage the creation of floats that can either be dismantled and re-used or which have been designed in partnership with an organisation who can use them post-parade (i.e. in the playground of a school or hospital play-room etc). Consider offering a prize for the best planned post-parade float.
- Use the parade to increase environmental awareness (e.g. commission a float with an environmental theme to join the parade, or offer prizes for most ingenious use of resources).

Give-aways

- If give-aways are an important part of the event, ask participants not to over-package these.
- Set up a collection for any useful give-aways that would normally be thrown away and donate them to local shelters or schools.
- Ask participants that give-aways be reusable items or items made from recycled materials (i.e. recycled content pens, bags, shirts and caps etc.).



Choice of venues

Support venues that are environmentally friendly and use your event to encourage the hotels you are supporting to go green. Encourage hotels to take easy steps such as:

- Not changing the sheets and towels daily unless requested by the guest.
- Using soap and shampoo dispensers if possible or recycling/refilling small bottles.
- Replacing regular light-bulbs for energy-saving bulbs.
- Fitting showers with water-saving heads.
- Training housekeeping staff to shut blinds and turn down the heat/air conditioning during the day in rooms while attendees are gone.
- Composting food waste and recycling packaging and other waste.
- Signing up to the Performance Plus Environment channel or other environmental management schemes (see www.failteireland.ie/performanceplus for more details on introducing environmentally friendly measures to the accommodation sector).

Communication

For the greening of your festival to be successful, you need the full participation of attendees. Most crucial is that they know what is in place, why, and how they can contribute. Make sure the 'greening' of the event is properly promoted and explained on the website and programme: take the time to write an inspiring introduction and description of what the festival will be doing and why.

- The earlier the attendees know about the festival's policy of environmental good practice the better. Advertise greening measures on the event website from the beginning, and use every opportunity to talk about them. Make sure promotional material, emails and tickets all include the 'green' message.
- Run an environmental poster campaign on public transport and park and ride buses to the event.
- In the festival programme include details of onsite recycling and waste prevention, reminding attendees to compost, recycle and use their own containers and showing where eco-stations are located.
- Signs to eco-stations and water stations should be as numerous as possible and volunteers should be ready to assist and educate attendees in order to minimise incorrect disposal of waste. Signage should be re-usable if possible.

- Let attendees know in advance (in emails and event confirmation materials) about how they can make a difference. Clearly set out easy actions that they can take (see appendix 2).

Agreements and contracts

The easiest way to ensure that environmental measures are complied with by vendors, staff, volunteers, participants and performers is through agreements and contracts. Ensure that you:

Ensure that you:

- Include the food and beverage requirements for your vendors in their contracts (see Appendix 1 for example).
- Include a clause in the contract of all staff to agree to participate in greening and waste reduction measures and outline what these are.
- Include a clause in the contract of performers/participants to participate in greening and waste reduction measures.
- Be specific about what you want the green team to accomplish and make sure you provide them with a job description and contract or volunteer agreement.



Appendix 1

Model environmental clause to include in agreement for vendors

Food and Beverage service requirements for vendors

- The use of biodegradable or deposit-on-return re-usable food service only, including plates, cups, bowls, cartons, knives, forks, stirrers and napkins.
- The full use of the composting and recycling facilities provided.
- The full use of liquid waste depositing facilities. No liquid waste to be poured into the ground.
- Limitation of food packaging to what is necessary for food safety and transportation.
- No sale of plastic water bottles and provision of free water jugs where possible.
- Encourage attendees to use of own food and drink containers.
- The use of hydrocarbon freezers instead of HFCs or HCFCs.
- Participation in any surplus food donation programmes being implemented.
- The serving of condiments in serving containers rather than individual packets.
- Agreement to clean-up area thoroughly at end of event.
- A commitment to organic, locally produced or fair trade foods wherever appropriate.

Biodegradable food service-ware can be found at the following websites:

www.irishmerchants.com

www.cultivate.ie

www.nvyro.com

www.ecofriendlyfrog.co.uk

www.ecoland.com

www.biopac.co.uk

The National Non-Food Crops Centre in the UK also has listings of biodegradable packaging suppliers.

www.nnfcc.co.uk

Appendix 2

Model guidelines to encourage attendees to participate in greening measures

Five easy steps for a greener festival

This year the festival has a new Green look. We want the festival to be as good for the environment as it is for you, and so this year we are undertaking many measures that will ensure that this is the greenest year ever! But it cannot be done without you. Please read the guidelines below and do as much as you can to contribute to the greening of this fantastic event.

- 1 Arrive by public transport and buy a 'green tag' to offset your carbon impact in getting here. Bring your own water-bottle and eating utensils, and use the water stations provided.
- 2 Compost all food scraps, cups, napkins, plates, utensils and any soiled cardboard in the composting bin. These will all be marked 'compostable' or 'biodegradable'.
- 3 Recycle all plastic bottles, glass and aluminium containers, publications, paper, paper bags, and dry cardboard in the recycling bins provided. Try not to take literature you don't need.
- 4 If you are camping or caravanning, please use the toilets provided and put waste-water into the containers provided: urine and waste-water that is poured onto the ground ends up in rivers and streams with serious environmental consequences.
- 5 If you're staying in a hotel, let them know you don't need to have your towels and sheets washed daily, and that you appreciate their efforts to reduce their impact on the environment.



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