



Sustainable Events

A guide for event organisers

**National
Heritage Week**
A **Heritage Council** programme





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Welcome to this guide on incorporating sustainable practices into National Heritage Week events

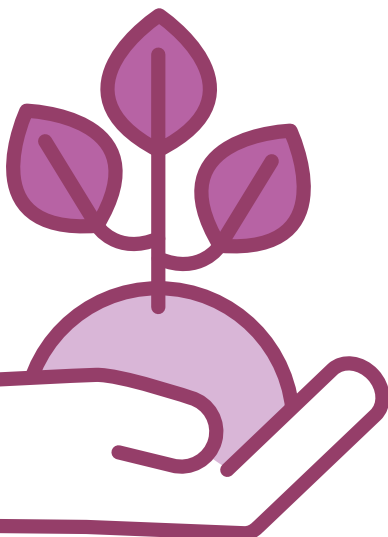


Introduction

Ireland has committed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. As we face a global biodiversity crisis, climate change and biodiversity loss are strategic pillars of the Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023-2028, Our Place in Time. We aim to help all those involved in Heritage Council programmes such as National Heritage Week to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and promotion of sustainable, climate positive and biodiversity positive events and projects.

National Heritage Week celebrates the richness and diversity of Ireland's built, natural and cultural heritage, and how important it is to protect and preserve this heritage for future generations. Incorporating sustainability into your events is an effective way to ensure that our natural and cultural heritage is protected for years to come.

Events can have significant impacts on the environment, community, and economy. Incorporating sustainable practices into your events can help reduce your environmental impact, conserve natural resources, promote local businesses, and support the well-being of your community while sharing the importance of sustainable climate action with your audience.



Who this guide is for

This guide is specifically designed for community groups and individuals who are organising events of all types for National Heritage Week. We aim to provide you with practical tips and ideas for incorporating sustainable practices into your events, regardless of whether sustainability is a core focus of your event or not. The guide is intended to present you with a menu of ideas which you can use to plan more sustainable events, entirely at your own pace.

The guide covers topics such as sustainable transportation, waste reduction, energy conservation, and sustainable food options. We will also provide you with ideas on how to effectively communicate sustainability messages to your event attendees. Of course, not all the tips will be relevant for all events, but we hope that the guide will inspire you to think creatively about how to incorporate sustainable practices into your National Heritage Week events. By working together, we can create events that celebrate our built, natural and cultural heritage while also promoting a sustainable future for our communities and the environment.

Our thanks to those who have assisted with comments on earlier drafts of this guide: Shirley Clerkin (Heritage Officer, Monaghan County Council), Ronan Healy (Heritage Week Programme Manager, The Heritage Council), Paula Kearney (Biodiversity Officer, Galway City Council), Amanda Pedlow (Heritage Officer, Offaly County Council), Ricky Whelan (Biodiversity Officer, Offaly County Council).

If you have feedback, queries or would like to input to future editions of the Guide, please contact Catherine Casey, Head of Heritage and Climate Change at ccasey@heritagecouncil.ie.

Dealing with Venues and Suppliers

You may need to book a venue for your event or to purchase services such as catering or supplies such as promotional materials. If you do, it is important to be clear with venue operators and suppliers about your sustainability goals for your Heritage Week event.

Some venues and suppliers will be very proactive in offering sustainable options but some of this may be new to commercial or community suppliers or venues. Remember to communicate your sustainability needs to your venue well in advance and ask them to confirm

which criteria they can meet. If you have a choice of venues and suppliers, use sustainability as one of your criteria in selecting suppliers. Even if not all of your needs can be met this time, remember that by communicating your requests, you are demonstrating to operators that there is market interest in sustainability and you could help to encourage them to make more sustainable choices in future.

Here are some questions National Heritage Week event organisers can ask when booking venues such as event spaces to ensure sustainability:



Energy Efficiency

- Does the venue use energy-efficient lighting, heating, and cooling systems?
- Does the venue use renewable energy, such as solar or wind power?
- Do the guest rooms or event spaces have energy-efficient appliances and lighting, such as LED bulbs?

Waste Management

- Does the venue have a recycling program in place?
- Does the venue use composting for food waste?
- Does the venue have a policy on reducing single-use plastics and waste in general?

Sustainable Transport

- Is the venue easily accessible by public transport?
- Does the venue provide bike racks or have public transport links nearby?
- Does the venue have electric vehicle charging stations, shuttle transport or carpooling options?

Biodiversity and Landscaping

- Does the venue use native plants in their landscaping?
- Does the venue have green spaces for guests to enjoy?
- Does the venue have a policy on protecting local wildlife and their habitats?



Sustainable Food and Beverages:

- How will food/beverages be served? Compostable containers, reusable containers, single-use containers etc?
- Does the venue use local and seasonal ingredients for their catering menus?
- Does the venue have a policy on reducing food waste?
- Does the venue provide options for vegetarian, vegan, or gluten-free diets?

By asking these questions, you can ensure that the venue you choose for your National Heritage Week event aligns with your sustainability goals and promotes environmentally-friendly practices. Remember to communicate your expectations with the venue beforehand and work together to make your event as sustainable as possible. Fáilte Ireland has produced a range of useful guides for venues and other businesses to assist them in delivering on their climate responsibilities (see <https://supports.failteireland.ie/climate-action>).

Impacts of Outdoor Events

Many National Heritage Week events are organised in the outdoors to celebrate the built, natural or cultural heritage of the local area. It is important for event organisers to ensure that events or projects which celebrate one aspect of our heritage do not inadvertently cause harm to another aspect. Some examples of this might be:

Increased Foot Traffic: Events celebrating one aspect of heritage may attract a large number of people, resulting in increased foot traffic in the area. This can lead

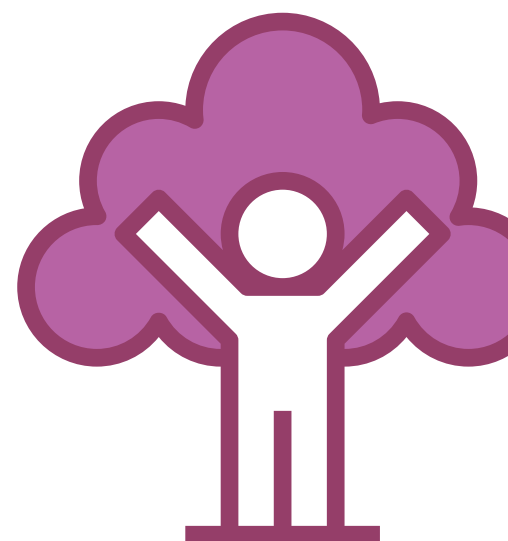
to unintended consequences, such as wear and tear on archaeological sites or damage to natural habitats.

Environmental Impacts: National Heritage Week events may have environmental impacts, such as pollution or damage to natural habitats. For example, an event that involves fireworks, balloon releases or large crowds may create noise pollution, disturbance or generate large amounts of waste, potentially harming the environment or wildlife in the area.



- Careful planning and consideration are necessary to ensure that all aspects of heritage are celebrated and promoted in a balanced and sustainable way.
- Plan events as early as possible and engage with relevant landowners and community leaders, discuss any permissions, insurance requirements etc well in advance
- Check for the presence of protected sites, habitats or species in the area that the event is planned for. Sources for these are:
 - Built and cultural heritage: maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment
 - Biodiversity: www.npws.ie/maps-and-data
- Your local authority heritage and/ or biodiversity officer will be able to guide you on the sensitivity of local heritage in the area. You should also contact local representatives of environmental NGOs, who may have personal knowledge of the sensitivities of the site.
- Make a plan for transport, ideally keeping car parking away from the site, encouraging active travel, carpooling or public transport and considering the use of shuttle transport if necessary
- Avoid holding events at particularly sensitive times of year (eg relating to ground nesting or migrating birds etc)
- Ensure the principles of Leave no Trace are met by event planners and participants (see www.leavenotraceireland.org) and consider the requirements of local farming or forestry operations at the time of your event
- Brief all participants on the sensitivities of the site, ideally in advance at booking stage and again when on site, reminding them of the ethos of the event and their personal responsibilities to ensure no harm is caused to the environment or heritage
- After the events ensure all signage or other events elements are removed without delay and any modifications made on the ground are remediated

Holding outdoor events during National Heritage Week is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the full breadth and interdependence of our heritage. Event organisers are encouraged to help participants get the most from this experience while ensuring that no inadvertent damage is caused.



Transport

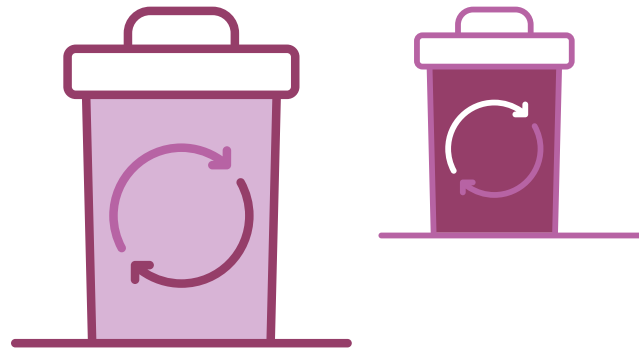
Transportation is an essential aspect of sustainability, particularly for events that attract large numbers of attendees. The transportation choices made by event attendees can significantly impact the event's overall environmental impact. Here are some tips for promoting sustainable transportation choices at your National Heritage Week event, even in rural areas:

- Choose a central location for the event that is easily accessible by sustainable transportation options. Consider locations close to greenways for example.
- Encourage attendees to use sustainable transportation options like public transport, walking, or cycling to reduce emissions from transport.
- Provide attendees with details of local transport links - see www.transportforireland.ie/ for details of newly expanded Local Link Rural Bus Services as well as national public transportation links.
- If public transport locally is limited, consider partnering with local transportation providers to provide shuttle services to and from the event.

- Encourage attendees to carpool to the event. Consider providing a designated carpool parking area or providing information on ride-sharing opportunities.
- If possible, use low-emission transportation options for event setup and transportation. This could include public transport, electric vehicles, bikes.
- Offer incentives such as discounts or give-aways for attendees who choose sustainable transportation options. This can encourage attendees to choose more sustainable options. Many Heritage Week events are free so this may not be relevant, but perhaps other incentives could be used.

By promoting sustainable transportation choices at your National Heritage Week event, you can reduce the event's overall environmental impact while also promoting sustainable practices to attendees. Remember to communicate your sustainable transportation goals to attendees and encourage them to participate in reducing transportation emissions.





Waste

National Heritage Week events can provide an excellent opportunity to reduce waste and promote sustainable practices. The first priority should always be to reduce the waste, and only if this is not possible, to ensure reuse and then recycling. Here are some tips for incorporating waste reduction and recycling into your event:

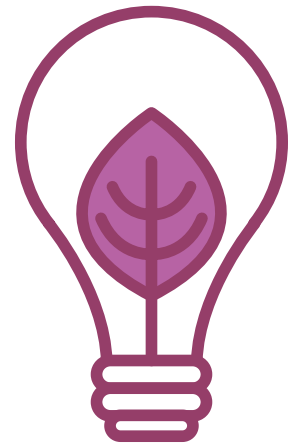
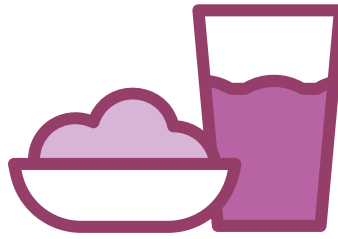
- Reduce single-use items: Avoid single-use items such as plastic or paper cups, plates, and cutlery. Instead, use reusable items like plates, glasses, napkins and reusable cutlery.
- In advance of the event, encourage attendees to bring reusable water bottles and ensure refill stations are available on-site.
- Avoid single portion items especially those packaged in plastic or mixed materials, eg jam, sauces, sugars etc.
- Consider whether name-tags, site signage or other small items are required. If they are essential, try to find reusable or compostable (paper) options. If plastic must be used, set up collection points at the end of the event and ensure all participants know that badge holders etc will be reused
- Composting and Recycling: Provide clearly labelled waste receptacles for recycling, compost, and landfill waste. Make sure that compostable and recyclable materials are properly sorted to reduce contamination.
- Use sustainable products such as bamboo or paper straws, recycled (and recyclable) napkins and paper, where no reusable options are available.
- Choose Local Suppliers to reduce transportation emissions and promote local businesses. Choose suppliers who use sustainable practices and materials.
- Educate attendees on the importance of waste reduction and how to properly dispose of waste. Provide information on recycling and composting and how to reduce waste in their daily lives.
- Avoid printing event programs and information unless necessary. Instead, provide information digitally, such as through a website or mobile app. Be conscious of the accessibility implications of this and provide hard copies where required for inclusivity. Where printing hard copy items is necessary, check with your printer for recycled paper and other environmental certification.

By incorporating waste reduction into your National Heritage Week event, you can reduce the event's environmental impact and promote sustainable practices to attendees. Remember to communicate your waste reduction goals to attendees and encourage them to participate in reducing waste.

Food

Choosing sustainable food options can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve natural resources, and support local farmers. Here are some tips for incorporating sustainable food options into your event:

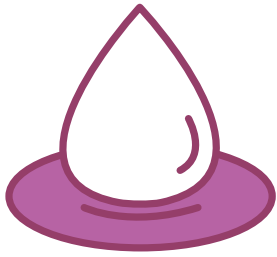
- Choose local and seasonal produce: By sourcing produce in season from local farmers, you reduce the carbon footprint of your event by minimising transportation and refrigeration costs. In addition, seasonal produce is more flavourful and nutritious.
- Provide and promote vegetarian or vegan options: Agriculture is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and reducing meat consumption can have a positive impact on the environment. Offering plant-based options can also help to accommodate attendees with dietary restrictions.
- Use organic and sustainable ingredients: Choose ingredients that are grown without pesticides and fertilizers. Look for certified organic and fair-trade labels.
- Minimise food waste: Plan carefully and order only what you need to reduce food waste. Plan how you might use leftover food for other events or donate it to local charities or social enterprises such as Food Cloud. Plan this well in advance of the event, or discuss with your venue or caterer.
- Avoid using single-use plastic or Styrofoam containers, plates, and utensils. Instead, choose compostable or reusable options.



Energy

By promoting sustainable energy use, you can reduce the environmental impact of your National Heritage Week event while also promoting sustainable practices to attendees. Remember to communicate your sustainability goals to attendees and encourage them to participate in reducing energy consumption.

Look for venues that have windows and natural light options. Use energy-efficient lighting and avoid leaving lights on when not in use. Consider using renewable energy sources like solar power or wind power.



Water

There are many ways that careful planning can reduce the quantity of water used by your event as well as reducing the water quality impact of your activities. If you are booking a venue, discuss with them their strategies for reducing water use (such as low-flow toilets, low flow taps, and rainwater use). Your event plan can contain commitments to reduce the impact of the event on water pollution and ensuring proper waste management, by reducing or ruling out single use plastics, water bottles, plates, cups, and other items that will generate waste and pollute water sources. Instead, use eco-friendly alternatives like reusable water bottles and compostable plates.

Educate attendees about water conservation and encourage them to use water wisely during the event. Place signs in restrooms, and at other key areas to encourage responsible water usage.

If water-based activities form part of the event, make sure that they are environmentally responsible and do not cause water pollution or disturbance to sensitive wildlife. Use natural or eco-friendly products for water-based activities.

Partner with local water conservation organisations to help raise awareness about water conservation issues and promote sustainable water usage. Contact Local Authorities Water Programme lawaters.ie for details of community action for water in your area, or a local Rivers Trust. After the event, evaluate the water usage and wastage to identify areas for improvement and to learn from your event's environmental impact.





Biodiversity

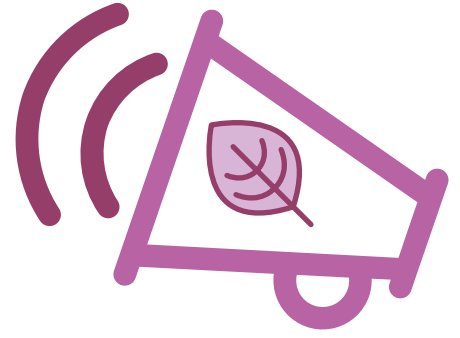
Conserving biodiversity is a crucial aspect of sustainability, and National Heritage Week events can provide an excellent opportunity to promote and actively conserve biodiversity. Here are some tips for incorporating biodiversity conservation into your event, even if it is not the main focus:

- Choose a natural setting for your event. Natural settings like parks, gardens, and woodlands can provide an opportunity to highlight the importance of biodiversity and showcase local flora and fauna.
- Provide opportunities for attendees to learn about local biodiversity. This could include guided nature walks, talks from local conservation experts, or interactive displays that highlight local wildlife.
- If your event includes a tour of a local built heritage site for example, consider inviting a local wildlife specialist to also speak to your audience about the biodiversity of the place. Many graveyards for example are havens for wildlife, buildings of architectural importance are also often home to bats, and your local historical site may have great importance for birdlife.
- Contact the Heritage or Biodiversity Officer of your local authority, your local branch of a biodiversity NGO such as BirdWatch Ireland, Irish Wildlife Trust, or the Irish Peatlands Conservation Council for more information about biodiversity in the area. You might be able to partner with a local branch for your event.
- If your event is taking place in a garden or similar outdoor space, promote sustainable, biodiversity-friendly gardening practices. This

could include providing information on composting, using native plants, and reducing the use of pesticides and herbicides. See the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and Gardening for Biodiversity booklet for more information – details in the Resources section.

- Use sustainable materials for event signage and decorations. Ensure you never use materials that harm biodiversity, such as non-biodegradable plastics or balloons, which can cause great harm to wildlife.
- Proper waste management is crucial to preserving biodiversity. Encourage attendees to dispose of waste responsibly and provide clearly labelled waste receptacles for recycling, compost, and landfill waste.
- Incorporate habitat restoration activities into your event. This could include planting native trees or plants, removing invasive species, or creating wildlife habitats like bird boxes or bat houses.
- Choose venues that aim to eliminate pesticide use and communicate this preference to venues.
- Collaborate with local conservation organisations to promote biodiversity conservation. This could include partnering with local wildlife centres or conservation groups to provide educational resources or volunteer opportunities for attendees.

By actively promoting biodiversity conservation at your National Heritage Week event, you can raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity and inspire attendees to take action to protect it. Remember to communicate your biodiversity conservation goals to attendees and encourage them to participate in preserving local flora and fauna.



Communicating Sustainability

Effective communication is crucial for promoting sustainability, climate, and biodiversity positive practices at National Heritage Week events. Even if the main focus of your event is not climate or biodiversity, you can incorporate some of these ideas to ensure the message of sustainability is integrated to your event.

Here are some tips for communicating these ideas to attendees:

- Create a sustainability mission statement: Develop a clear and concise mission statement that outlines the sustainability goals of the event. Include this statement on event materials such as the website, marketing materials, and signage.
- Use social media platforms to share sustainability messages with your attendees. Use hashtags that promote sustainable practices and share photos and videos of your sustainable initiatives.
- Provide training for event staff to ensure they are knowledgeable about the sustainability goals of the event. Encourage them to share this information with attendees and answer any questions they may have.
- Offer educational materials such as brochures, pamphlets, or posters that explain the environmental impact of the event and the benefits of sustainable practices. These materials can be made available online, placed around the event space or distributed to attendees upon arrival.
- Encourage attendees to participate in sustainable practices by providing information on how they can reduce their environmental impact. This can include encouraging them to use public transportation, offering incentives for bringing reusable cups and containers, or hosting sustainability workshops.
- Highlight sustainable vendors: If you have vendors who prioritise sustainability, highlight them on your website or event materials. This can encourage attendees to support these vendors and learn more about sustainable practices.
- Work with local environmental organisations to promote sustainability messages and educate attendees about the importance of protecting the environment. These organisations can provide valuable resources and expertise.
- By effectively communicating the importance of sustainability, climate, and biodiversity, event organisers can inspire attendees to take action and make a positive impact on the environment. Remember to keep messaging clear, concise, and consistent across all communication channels to ensure maximum impact.
- Let attendees know about the sustainability initiatives you've implemented, and encourage them to participate in reducing the environmental impact of the event.

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of seventeen goals set by the United Nations to be achieved by 2030. These goals are a call to action for governments, businesses, and communities to work together to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. By incorporating sustainability into your National Heritage Week event, you can contribute to achieving several of these goals.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Remember to communicate your sustainability goals to attendees and encourage them to participate in promoting sustainability in their daily lives.



Clean Water and Sanitation:

By conserving water and preventing pollution your event can contribute to SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation.



Sustainable Cities and Communities:

Encouraging sustainable transportation and waste reduction practices can help promote sustainable urban development and reduce the environmental impact of cities.



Responsible Consumption and Production:

Promoting the use of sustainable products and reducing waste can help reduce resource consumption and promote more responsible production and consumption patterns.



Climate Action:

Promoting sustainable transportation, energy use, and waste reduction at your National Heritage Week event can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to combating climate change.



Life Below Water:

By promoting sustainable water use, reducing plastic waste, and protecting local waterways, you can contribute to the preservation of wetlands, freshwater and marine life and the health of our oceans.

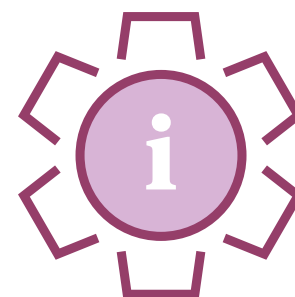


Life On Land:

Incorporating biodiversity conservation into your event and promoting sustainable forestry practices can help protect ecosystems and promote the preservation of wildlife habitats.

Useful Resources

The Heritage Council team are available to assist you in planning for the sustainability of your event. The Heritage Week website www.heritageweek.ie has a range of useful resources. For specific queries contact:



- Head of Heritage and Climate Change, Catherine Casey
ccasey@heritagecouncil.ie
- Heritage Week Programme Manager, Ronan Healy
rhealy@heritagecouncil.ie

Biodiversity	
National Biodiversity Data Centre	www.biodiversityireland.ie
National Parks and Wildlife Service	www.npws.ie
Gardening for Biodiversity book and resources	laois.ie/gardening-for-biodiversity
Managing for pollinators	pollinators.ie
BirdWatch Ireland	birdwatchireland.ie
Irish Wildlife Trust	iwt.ie
An Taisce	www.antaisce.org
Climate Action	
Climate Ireland	www.climateireland.ie
Climate Action Regional Offices	www.caro.ie
Waste	
Food cloud	food.cloud
Rediscovery Centre	www.rediscoverycentre.ie
Recreate	recreate.ie
The issue with balloons	www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/problem-balloons
Sustainable Tourism and Events	
Failte Ireland has produced a series of guides for tourism businesses in addressing climate, biodiversity and sustainability. The guide for Festivals and Meetings and Events will be of particular interest. Details at supports.failteireland.ie/climate-action	

International Standards (may be used by venues or suppliers)

ISO 14001	Environmental Management Systems
ISO 20121	Event Sustainability Management Systems
ISO 50001	Energy Management
Other relevant certification schemes	Global Reporting Initiative www.globalreporting.org Green Globe www.greenglobe.com Earth Check earthcheck.org
Ethical sustainable purchasing	
Fair Trade	www.fairtrade.ie
Rainforest alliance	www.rainforest-alliance.org

National Heritage Week Event Sustainability Checklist



By using this checklist, you can help to ensure that your National Heritage Week event incorporates sustainability into every aspect of the process, from venue selection to waste reduction. By promoting sustainable practices, you can help to create a more environmentally friendly event and promote sustainable behaviour among attendees.

Sustainable venues and suppliers

- Check venue or supplier environmental management system
- Discuss sustainability requirements with venues and suppliers before booking

Outdoor events

- Check sensitivities of your site and plan accordingly
- Apply principles of Leave no Trace to all event planning, operation and clean-up

Sustainable Transport

- Organise event in a location accessible by active travel or public transport
- Actively encourage attendees to use public transport, cycling, or walking to the event
- Provide shuttle transport or carpooling for more remote locations
- Work with local suppliers to reduce transportation emissions and promote local businesses

Waste Reduction

- Use online event promotion and booking to reduce printing
- If printing is required, use certified recycled paper
- Provide clearly labelled bins for recycling, compost, and landfill waste
- Avoid single-use items such as plastic or paper cups - request reusable cups for tea and coffee
- Avoid bottled water – request jugs of water and encourage attendees to bring reusable water bottles
- Avoid plastic promotional items, particularly those that may cause pollution (e.g. balloons)

Food

- Use seasonal, locally sourced food
- Ensure vegetarian and vegan options are available
- Use sustainable products (compostable straws, recyclable napkins, reusable plates and cutlery)
- Choose suppliers who use sustainable practices and materials

Sustainable Energy

- Choose a venue with an energy reduction policy (efficient use of heating, lighting etc)
- If generators are needed, plan to reduce fuel use, ensure the right size generator is used.
- For AV or IT check supplier policies on energy reduction - request energy efficient equipment

Water

- Ensure your venue promotes water conservation and encourage attendees to reduce water use
- Provide water dispensers or refill stations and encourage the use of reusable water bottles.
- Ensure that water used for cleaning and other purposes is collected and reused if possible.
- Avoid activities that could harm water quality, such as using harsh chemicals for cleaning or releasing balloons or other litter that could end up in waterways.
- Communicate your commitment to water conservation and sustainability to attendees.
- Work with local environmental organisations to identify ways to support water conservation efforts.

Biodiversity

- Consider holding part of your event outdoors and promoting the importance of biodiversity
- Choose a venue that has a positive impact on local wildlife - ask for venue policy on biodiversity
- Consider adding elements to your event to improve biodiversity, eg planting native trees

- Invite local biodiversity conservation groups to partner with you in delivering a conservation positive message to your attendees.
- Plan ahead to address any potential for your event to contribute to spread of invasive species

Communications and Engagement

- Promote event online using website and social media as far as possible
- Make online booking and feedback forms available
- Ensure promotional products are used only if absolutely necessary.
- Ensure any promotional products, prizes, gifts etc are environmentally friendly and sustainably produced (reduce plastic, use reusable, recycled and recyclable materials where possible).
- Inform attendees about the importance of sustainability and how you are trying to reduce the climate and environmental impact of your National Heritage Week event
- Ask for feedback and suggestions for how you can improve the sustainability of future events
- Provide information for attendees on sustainable practices and how to be more climate aware in their daily lives
- Incorporate messages about climate action and biodiversity loss into all events
- The organising team should meet shortly afterwards to review the event and identify lessons learnt that will prove valuable for future events



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