



Sustainable targets and standards
for the outdoor events industry

Green Events Code of Practice (GECOP)

National Pilot Key Findings

February 2025



Julie's Bicycle
CREATIVE • CLIMATE • ACTION



With thanks to project funders:



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This project was also supported by Festival Republic and 60 participating event organisers - see appendix 2 for full list.

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Executive Summary

The Green Events Code of Practice (GECoP) National Pilot worked across ten local authorities in England to assess sixty events (with a total audience of 2.3 million) against consistent minimum environmental standards. The project tested how effectively local authorities could integrate an environmental assessment into event processes and the positive change this can lead to in the environmental practices at events.

The results of this pilot provide clear evidence that a local authority-led assessment of events against minimum environmental expectations can create tangible and measurable improvements in environmental practices. Engagement in the assessment led to a **60% increase in the number of events putting in place new environmental measures** ahead of the event, and **92% said they are more likely to implement new initiatives next year**.

The benefits for local authorities were also clear, with the GECoP assessment creating **new opportunities to discuss environmental sustainability with events**, some for the first time, as well as **closer internal links between sustainability and wider teams**. For many local authorities, GECoP also informed **new environmental clauses within event policies**, and provided an evidenced view of current practice.

Headline findings:

1

Assessing events against voluntary minimum environmental standards stimulates significant improvements in understanding and practices

2

A local authority-led environmental assessment can create wider positive benefits for both local authorities and events

3

Both event organisers and local authorities support nationally aligned minimum environmental standards for events

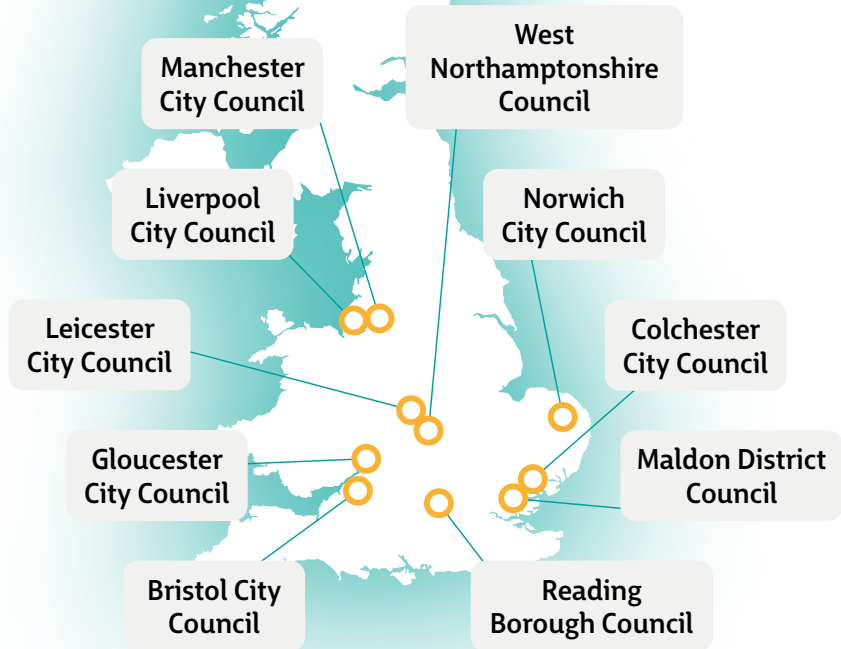
The overwhelming support for national adoption of consistent minimum environmental standards and assessment points to clear next steps. These are to further explore how an environmental assessment can be integrated into existing local authority processes and to develop resources to support local authorities of all sizes with roll-out.

The Project in Numbers

10
participating
local authorities

60
events assessed
for environmental
practices

2.3
million
visitors to
participating
events



As a result of taking part in the assessment:



83%
of event
organisers
reported a better
understanding
of their
environmental
performance



60%
of event
organisers
reported
implementing
new additional
environmental
measures ahead
of their event



92%
of event
organisers
stated they are
'more likely to
implement new
initiatives next
year'



75%
of local
authorities
made changes
to event policies
or procedures
to include
environmental
considerations

Testimonials

“The initial findings from the GECOP pilot demonstrate the transformative potential of local authorities utilising the DATE model to cost-effectively and efficiently improve the accessibility and environmental sustainability of all types of cultural events. If integrated across the UK’s events, the shared insights, collective learning and small but significant adaptations toward inclusive and greener policies and practices would quickly compound to ensure comprehensive advances toward a vibrant UK cultural events sector that integrates people and planet into every aspect of its operation.”

Dr Mathew Flynn - Director of the Institute of Popular Music at University of Liverpool

“We welcome GECOP as a standardised, national framework for widescale sector change. We valued being part of the pilot, which saw participating event organisers put in place instant sustainability improvements, gain a better understanding of their environmental performance and become more confident to make changes. GECOP’s minimum best practices offer an accessible, affordable route for small events to improve their sustainability. Although Bristol’s larger and more established events are already surpassing these minimum standards, GECOP allows the flexibility to apply additional requirements to meet our city’s objectives, supporting our ambition to go above and beyond the framework. As with any code of practice, our desire is to see its ambitions evolve, ensuring the events industry stays ahead of national and international environmental targets where possible.”

Councillor Tony Dyer - Leader of Bristol City Council

“The GECOP pilot has generated a real buzz across Reading’s festival community. It has helped develop a common language for local festival organisers to explore ‘what sustainable looks like’ at events. It has been wonderful seeing festival organisers of various size events, local suppliers and sector bodies sharing knowledge and offering advice. Our participation in the GECOP pilot, and the relationships with events and suppliers built around it, has created a strong foundation for Reading’s renewed 5-year Climate Emergency Strategy (2025 – 2030) in terms of evidence, shared targets and tools. It has also reinforced the sense of local events being part of something bigger - a community working together toward net-zero.”

Councillor John Ennis - Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, Reading Borough Council

“Taking part in the GECOP pilot has enabled us to understand where the DATE Toolkit and GECOP process can help shape our future approach to sustainable events, contributing to the development of meaningful actions being developed for the next five years (2025 to 2030) as we work towards our Zero Carbon by 2038 (science-based) target. We have been engaging with a diverse range of events on sustainability over the last few years and we’re aware there are still differences in approaches so this has provided a welcome consistency with free-to-use tools. Having an approach taken collectively across the country is much welcomed”.

Councillor John Hacking - Executive Member for Events, Manchester City Council

Introduction

About the Green Events Code of Practice

Eighty four percent¹ of the UK's jurisdictions, including city, county, and borough councils, have declared a Climate Emergency. Some local authorities already have or intend to develop environmental standards or requirements for events as part of funding, tender processes, site permissions, or as part of delivery of city owned events, risking a 'lottery' of expectations emerging - a concern shared by the events industry and local authorities. In the absence of legislation, recognised minimum standards or best practices for event sustainability in the UK, it is important that a nationally consistent approach is developed to energise and drive change.

The Green Events Code of Practice (GECoP) was developed to establish consistent expectations across the UK for event organisers, licensing authorities, Safety Advisory Groups, local authorities, event suppliers and voluntary certification providers.

The first draft version (Appendix 1), released October 2022, was the result of extensive consultation across the outdoor live events sector, and was developed in alignment with existing frameworks and initiatives – global, national, and sector specific. The code has been endorsed in principle by LIVE, the trade body for the UK music industry, and is supported by the Local Authority Event Organisers Association (LAEOG).

Development of the code has been financially supported by; the Purple Guide Grant Fund (managed by the Events Industry Forum), the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF), Festival Republic and Superstruct.

About this Research Project

This 12 month 'co-learning' pilot project aimed to:

- 1 Test whether events could be assessed for environmental practices using GECoP as a minimum standard for performance;**
- 2 Assess whether this assessment would lead to improved sustainability practices**
- 3 Understand the potential for national adoption, and the resources needed to achieve this.**

Ten local authorities participated in the project, working with 60 events of varied types and scale using the Donut Advisory Toolkit for Events (DATE) as an assessment method for environmental practices.

The project was co-designed by participating local authorities, with peer-to-peer learning being integral to the iterative process.

A number of fundamental principles informed the design of the project, reflecting the outcomes of stakeholder consultations undertaken to develop the code across two years:

- Local authorities across the UK are experiencing a funding crisis, with many prioritising front-line services, leading to a lack of resources available for climate-related investment.
- There is a lack of expertise and knowledge within the majority of local authorities (including event departments) on event sustainability.
- The majority of event organisers have not taken significant steps on environmental sustainability, and therefore a national approach needs to start with first steps.

- The majority of event organisers lack expertise in event sustainability, particularly amongst smaller and voluntary organisations and;
- The majority of events in the UK are small and community or voluntary organisations with limited resources, and therefore;
- Any assessment needs to be based on information that an event organiser can feasibly provide and both parties can understand.
- For the above reasons, a nationally scalable assessment cannot (in the immediate term) include comprehensive data reporting for the majority of events, as events do not have this data.

The above factors lead to the need for designing an assessment which is:

- (a) easy to understand for both event organisers completing the assessment and local authority staff receiving and interpreting the assessment, and;
- (b) is quick to complete and review, requiring minimum time (and therefore resource and cost) for both stakeholders.

There is a trade-off between the level of detail in any assessment and the resulting information and insight. Resources often limit the ability of small-scale event organisers to cannot obtain detailed information, such as detailed carbon emissions data. The attempt to get such information can be counter-productive in achieving the ultimate aim of shifting toward more sustainable practices.

An integral part of this project was a partnership with the Donut Advisory Toolkit for Events (DATE). The Green Events Code of Practice was used as the basis for the sections and specific questions in the assessment, along with the outcomes generated, and the DATE Toolkit was the method of assessment and analysis.

Headline Findings

1. Assessing events against voluntary minimum environmental standards leads to significant improvements in understanding and practices

- ▶ Over 75% of local authorities said GECOP helped to make changes to event policies or procedures to include **greater environmental conditions**

Among participating events:

- ▶ **83% reported a better understanding** of their environmental practices
- ▶ **80% of events reported that they now have greater confidence** in taking action
- ▶ **60% of events reported that they put in place additional environmental measures** this year and **92% said they are more likely to implement new initiatives next year**

2. A local authority-led environmental assessment can create wider positive benefits for both local authorities and events

Local authorities reported:

- ▶ **Better engagement with events** on how local authorities can support in overcoming challenges
- ▶ **Better engagement with internal local authority teams** and greater exposure for sustainability teams
- ▶ **Better access to capital** for local authority projects

Of participating events:

- ▶ **4 out of 5 events reported increased conversations** with stakeholders, with the potential of relationship-building and reduced costs of solutions
- ▶ There was a reported benefit of being part of a wider community taking climate action, understanding challenges better, with improved confidence

3. Event organisers and local authorities support nationally aligned minimum environmental standards for events

- ▶ **All participating local authorities agreed** that there should be nationally aligned environmental assessment criteria for events and such criteria will help them achieve their environmental goals

- ▶ **96% of the event organisers** that took part in the survey support nationwide minimum environmental standards in principle

4. An assessment against minimum standards supports widespread adoption of environmental practices across the sector, complementing pioneer-level initiatives geared to larger scale events.

- ▶ GECOP was successfully tested as an environmental minimum standard for varied event types and scales alongside more stringent measures for larger events by some of the participating local authorities
- ▶ Local authorities hosting and supporting large scale pioneering events (such as ACT1.5) highlighted the importance of both leading events and a minimum baseline of standards to create change throughout the sector

- ▶ **An assessment of minimum environmental standards helps to translate what is possible for community-scale events, helping them to set the foundations in place for future improvements**

5. The need for further resources and guidance were identified to better support more local authorities in implementing an assessment against minimum environmental standards

This project highlighted a series of next steps in building towards a sustainable outdoor events sector. These included:

- ▶ **Tools and guidance needed for local authorities to integrate GECOP assessments into existing processes and engage events at scale**

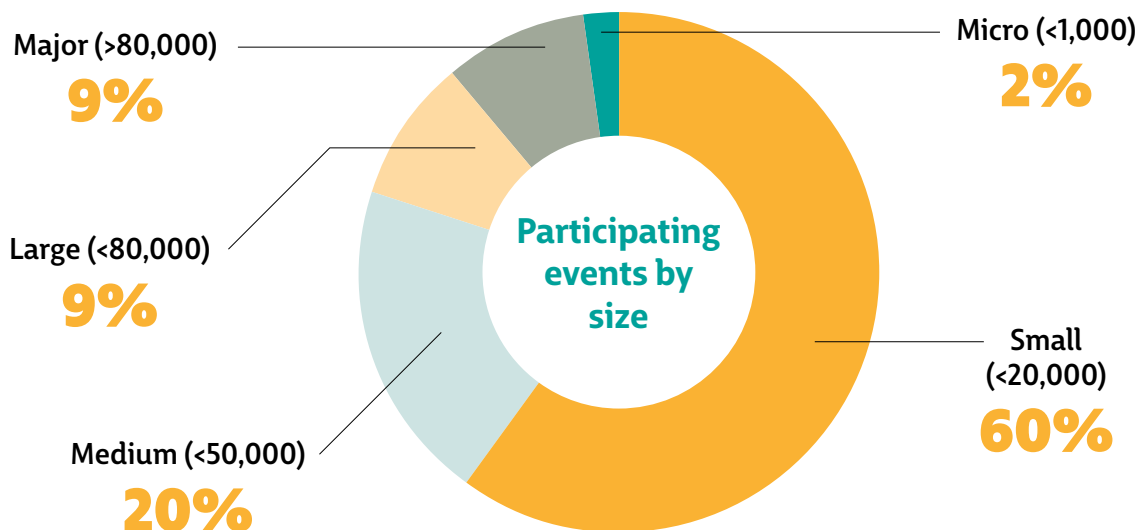
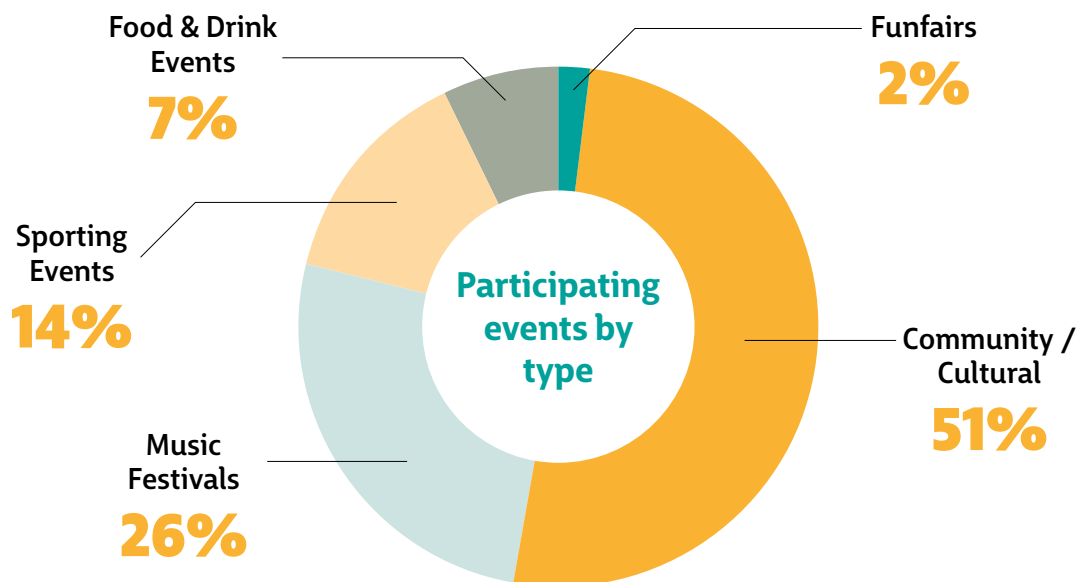
- ▶ **Further exploration required on how GECOP should apply to events of different sizes, types and levels of maturity on sustainability, and the most appropriate accountability mechanisms to ensure effectiveness**

Methodology

Background

The GECOP pilot project engaged **ten local authorities** across England to test a consistent approach to assessing outdoor events against minimum environmental standards for the first time. Each developed a plan to bring the assessment into existing processes with events.

Local authorities implemented GECOP with **60 outdoor events**, reflecting a range of sizes, types and levels of maturity on sustainability. They also included a mix of events run by local authorities and third parties.



How the Green Events Code of Practice was Implemented

Local authorities were asked to conduct an environmental assessment of a cohort of events based on the GECOP standards as part of the normal process for engaging events.

The **Donut Advisory Toolkit for Events (DATE)** was used as the primary method of assessing events against the standards of GECOP. The DATE Toolkit was aligned to the standards and tailored to any specific needs of each local authority. Event organisers were asked to complete the Toolkit as a way of evaluating their current environmental practices. You can read more about the DATE Toolkit in the information box.

Evaluation

The local authorities' experience of integrating the GECOP assessment into existing engagement processes for outdoor events was fed back through an end of project peer-to-peer learning session, online survey and one-to-one interviews.

Similarly, the experience of events in responding to the environmental assessment and whether it influenced any change to their environmental practices was understood through a roundtable and survey for event organisers. In some instances, a DATE Toolkit response before and after the event also highlighted where improvements to environmental practices had been made through engagement in the assessment.



The use of the DATE Toolkit

DATE was the primary assessment framework used to enable local authorities and event organisers to understand environmental practices against the GECOP minimum standards.

The DATE Toolkit worked as a short, simple survey that produced three main outputs: information on the sustainability profile of the event; links to resources to support training and development; and aggregated data for local authorities to identify investment priorities.

The Toolkit was aligned with GECOP and adapted to the unique demands of varying event scales and contexts. Event organisers responded to questions which generated a Red/Amber/Green result of an event's performance in different areas, as well as an overall event score. This also included an assessment of accessibility based on the Attitude is Everything Live Events Charter. DATE is also aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The DATE Toolkit is intentionally simple to use, with an accessible methodology for benchmarking sustainability efforts without the need for specialist training.

Developed as part of collaboration between Vision for Sustainable Events, Attitude is Everything, Cheltenham Festivals and Cheltenham Borough Council. The Toolkit is based on the theory of doughnut economics, connecting the social foundation and environmental ceiling that are impacted by human activities.



[More information can be found here](#)

CREATIVE CLIMATE TOOLS

The use of the Creative Climate Tools

The Julie's Bicycle Creative Climate Tools were used in the pilot as a free and easy-to-use online carbon calculator. Events were encouraged to measure their carbon footprint using the tool as part of meeting the GECOP minimum requirements. Some local authorities, such as Manchester City Council, used the Creative Climate Tools to test whether the environmental assessment helped events to tangibly reduce carbon emissions. This evidence base will be built over time as more carbon footprints are measured.

Carbon data will complement responses from the DATE Toolkit assessments, providing quantitative evidence to guide environmental action and investment by local authorities. The carbon footprinting of events through calculators, such as the Creative Climate Tools, will also help local authorities to monitor progress towards local authority climate goals.



[More information can be found here](#)

Detailed Findings

Can GECOP be used as a framework to assess whether events are meeting minimum environmental standards?

Through this pilot, local authorities explored ways in which an environmental assessment based on GECOP could be best brought into existing processes for engaging outdoor events. Local authorities determined their own process for integrating the assessment, with the support of sustainability experts in the core pilot project team.

The approaches taken by local authorities

For this pilot, local authorities assessed events against the GECOP standards as a **standalone and voluntary exercise** (i.e. the assessment was not linked to existing processes, such as site permissions or licensing). As the assessment was a new requirement on events, this was deemed to be the most appropriate approach.

Some local authorities were able to integrate the GECOP environmental assessment (delivered via the DATE Toolkit) with existing engagement processes on event sustainability:

- **Manchester City Council** embedded the assessment within the previous approach of issuing a short sustainability survey and guidance, successfully demonstrating how existing leading approaches can be leveraged and built upon. Manchester also tested the application of GECOP for indoor and sports events.
- **Bristol City Council** trialled using the GECOP assessment alongside a pre-existing and more extensive set of questions to evaluate the environmental practice of events that form part of its Expression of Interest (EOI) tool. Completion of the EOI tool is a mandatory requirement for events to receive **site permission**. Bristol also successfully integrated the GECOP standards into **contracts, tenders** and **funding requirements** for local authority-run events.
- Having been named as the world's first 'Accelerator City' for climate action by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Liverpool is looking closely at how it can host sustainable events in the city region. Within this pilot, **Liverpool City Council** explored the ways in which GECOP and ACT 1.5 could form a blended approach to create positive change at all scales of events.

Most local authorities held meetings with participating events to go through the DATE Toolkit together during the planning phase of the event. These took place either as one-to-one sessions, or as a series of multi-stakeholder workshops. The engagement enabled local authorities to guide events through the assessment and discuss challenges and solutions.

Uses and benefits of the environmental assessment

For nearly two thirds of participating local authorities, this was the first time environmental considerations were integrated into event assessment processes. Local authorities reported a number of benefits from doing so:

- **Understanding environmental practices at events** - All local authorities agreed that the GECOP standards worked well as a criteria to base an assessment of environmental practices at events. The DATE Toolkit was also seen as a useful and easy method of assessing events against GECOP and understanding an event's environmental performance.
- **Identifying gaps in practice** - The assessment was a clear way for local authorities to spot unique challenges at particular events and identify common themes across the event portfolio, helping to inform where the local authority may be able to support.

"GECOP provided a common language for events to talk about sustainability. Workshops then helped to build a close community working towards environmental action, with knowledge sharing, which was particularly useful for smaller events"

Reading Borough Council

- **Building the case for investment** - The environmental assessment process has provided local authorities with greater insight as to where investment is needed to make the greatest environmental improvements, directing limited resources for maximum impact. For instance, the identification of common challenges for events has helped some local authorities build an evidence base for particular investments that are needed to better support event decarbonisation.

- **Opening up conversations with events on environmental practice** - All local authorities agreed that GECOP created a new opportunity to discuss how events can improve their sustainability. Local authorities reported GECOP being a valuable framework for discussions, with the DATE Toolkit acting as a practical focus.
- **Greater internal engagement** - All local authorities said GECOP helped to engage internal stakeholders as well as events, facilitating stronger connections between local authority teams. One example is how Leicester City Council's event team reported closer links to its active travel teams in pursuit of sustainable solutions.
- **Greater confidence in conversations around sustainability** - Participation in this national pilot provided local authorities with greater leverage to confidently take forward conversations on sustainability. The assessment created a robust context for making environmental requests to events, with the consistency of standards across the local authorities reducing the risk of event pushback.
- **Connection to accessibility** - Local authorities expressed benefits in having the environmental assessment sitting alongside accessibility requirements as part of DATE. In the context of limited resources and capacity, having a ready-made and easy to adopt approach to understanding an event's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities around accessibility as well was welcomed.

"The GECOP pilot has helped to better connect our internal teams around sustainability topics. Our events team is now working closely with the active travel team on a new event in 2025 to promote cycling and sustainable travel options in the city"

Leicester City Council

Learnings for implementation

The pilot revealed a number of common themes to address in support of future development of the event environmental assessment based on GECOP.

- **Using the DATE Toolkit works for the assessment** - The DATE Toolkit was successfully deployed as the main assessment method for the standards of GECOP at all local authorities. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive in the Toolkit's simplicity and efficiency in evaluating the environmental practices in place at events.

"Whilst aspirations can go further, having baseline standards will raise everyone's game, so make it easier for events to meet any additional requirements here."

- Bristol City Council

- **Overcoming limits around resourcing for event engagement** - Most local authorities held meetings with event organisers to go through the environmental assessment together. While this was easy and of benefit within this pilot, it would not be possible to take this approach at scale. Similarly, there are capacity implications for how local authorities review the DATE Toolkit responses from each event.

Clear supporting guidance for events on how to complete the assessment, and integration of the DATE Toolkit into an online event application portal would help to address these challenges.

- **Checking the accuracy of self-assessments** - As a self-assessed review of environmental practices, there is potential for inconsistencies in how events score themselves. Related to the above, this is twinned with resource implications in reviewing submissions for consistency.

One possible solution would be to review a percentage of events each year as a spot check on the accuracy of their assessment responses. This approach is already successfully used to audit accredited food providers regionally and nationally.

- **Understanding differing levels of influence and control** - There is a need to acknowledge areas which are beyond an individual event's control and influence. For instance, owing to its location an event may be unable to make choices over its energy supply. In other instances, a lower environmental score may be due to a factor within the local authority's responsibility rather than the event itself. An event's size, characteristics, location and other factors may influence an event's ability to meet the GECOP standards.

Clear communication is needed to ensure events understand the assessment as a gap analysis to identify needs and areas of support.

- **Conducting the environmental assessment at the right time** - It is best to engage events with the DATE Toolkit early in the planning stage to ensure changes can be made. Re-engaging events after the delivery is also valuable to review the progress that was made and discuss future improvements.

Can GECOP lead to an improvement in environmental practices?

The purpose of minimum environmental standards is to create change across the entire outdoor events sector by making a foundational level of commitments the norm. The GECOP pilot tested whether integrating an environmental assessment as part of the local authority processes would create this positive impact.

This section summarises findings that highlight the improvement in environmental practices that exposure to an environmental assessment process achieved.

Improvements among local authorities

Participation in the GECOP pilot project has led to a number of improvements regarding environmental awareness and practices at local authorities. These are summarised below.

- **New environmental assessments**

For **nearly two thirds** of participating local authorities, this was the first time environmental considerations were integrated into event assessment processes. All local authorities confirmed that they intend to continue assessing the environmental practices of events going forward. As a direct outcome of this pilot, the commitment of local authorities to continue monitoring events from an environmental perspective is a behavioural improvement.

- **Improved or new event policies, procedures and strategies**

Over 75% of local authorities said that this project has helped to make changes to existing, or inform new event policies or procedures with environmental considerations. GECOP was used as a key reference point for these changes. As one example, Norwich City Council has a new policy in which events taking place in the park must now connect to the grid and 25% of food must be plant based. GECOP is also informing the renewal of some local authority climate strategies, such as Reading's renewed 5-year Climate Emergency Strategy (2025 – 2030).

“Engagement with GECOP has helped us look at our own council environmental strategy, as well as putting in place an environmental policy for our own events. Having the pilot has massively helped gain a footing on environmental performance”

- Leicester City Council

“Through this pilot, our council's event policy has been renewed, with a sustainability section and environmental considerations incorporated for first time”

- Colchester City Council

Improvements among events

The environmental assessment based on GECOP led to notable improvements in sustainability at events. The changes reported by events organisers as a result of participating in the GECOP assessment include:

- **Greater understanding of environmental performance**
83% of event organisers reported a better understanding of their environmental performance after taking the assessment. Those that didn't included sports, conference and a talks-based event, which have stated that the assessment questions did not adequately relate to their event activity.
- **Greater confidence in taking environmental actions**
80% of event organisers reported that they now have greater confidence in taking actions to reduce their environmental impacts.
- **Greater engagement around environmental issues**
80% of event organisers reported having more conversations with stakeholders on how to reduce environmental impacts as a result of the assessment.
- **Implementation of more environmental actions**
60% of event organisers reported that they put in place new additional environmental measures this year as a result of the pre-event assessment. The most common measures events said they implemented are as follows:

Rank	Actions taken by events in 2024
1	Sustainable energy measures
2	Introduced reusable cups
3	Engaged with stakeholders
4	New policy, strategy or action plan
5	New data collection for insights

In addition, **92%** of event organisers stated they are 'more likely to implement new initiatives next year'.

- **Improved environmental performance**
On average, events improved their DATE assessment scores by **26%** when a pre and post event assessment was carried out². The results indicate that simply conducting the assessment encourages event organisers to improve environmental planning and increase action.

"There were many occasions where organisers improved their sustainability actions simply by being asked the questions in the assessment. For others, the assessment encouraged them to formalise things they were already doing into policies, ensuring good environmental practices are then baked into future events."

- Bristol City Council

"GECOP helps to raise environmental standards to a baseline from which all events can progress."

- Leicester City Council

Conclusion

The Green Events Code of Practice, and associated assessment tools, provides a framework for rapid widescale sector change, by focusing on minimum voluntary best practices, which could become mandatory in future.

To meet the urgent challenge of climate breakdown, it is imperative that every economic sector moves as quickly as possible to reduce emissions and impacts and contribute to the global target of limiting temperatures rise to 1.5 degrees. GECOP helps to support the adoption of critical environmental measures in a sector where many are small to medium organisations without significant resources.

Importantly, this approach encourages change while not placing immediate, unrealistic expectations on small and voluntary/not-for-profit organisations in the UK's cultural landscape. It also provides support and guidance alongside assessments in a way that is accessible, free to users and scalable, reinforcing progress.

This pilot revealed that using minimum environmental standards to assess events can work successfully and influence positive change. Both local authorities and event organisers experienced better understanding of environmental practices at events, the challenges they can help overcome and closer internal and external engagement on sustainability.

Further, the code in its current form is pitched at a level that stretches current practices among most of the event community, but leaves room for local authorities to apply additional requirements to larger or more established events and organisations, with some already doing so successfully.

Larger event organisers (i) may be required under current legislation to undertake environmental reporting, or (ii) be required by local authorities to provide additional reporting or meet stricter standards, or (iii) choose to undertake more detailed third party assessments, carbon auditing etc, from the existing marketplace of providers of consultancy, assessment and certification. In this sense, large events should be - and many already are - surpassing the minimum standards tested in this project, with engagement in more advanced practices and reporting.

For the rest of the sector, minimum voluntary standards can play an immediate and impactful role in improving environmental practices at events, while also providing the insights necessary to develop local, regional and national policy. It can achieve these aims in a model that is cost effective and scalable.

Next Steps

The project has shown the need for further research in two areas:

1 Further exploration of how GECOP can be best implemented by local authorities, looking at:

- Different methods of integrating GECOP into local authority processes, with a focus on the potential of site permissions as the most likely point of integration
- How GECOP should apply to events of different size and type
- What thresholds may apply regarding scores and expectations in DATE Toolkit
- If and how compliance should be rolled-out and enforced, and the possible impacts
- Who has responsibilities for reviewing and enforcing actions from assessment results within local authorities and how this can be structured

2 The tools and guidance local authorities need to implement GECOP, with further work needed to:

- Understand the best approach for engaging events at scale, balancing resource limitations with the need for insights and nuance from close dialogue with events
- Develop guidance on how to integrate the DATE Toolkit onto online event application systems
- Understand and create the resources required to provide guidance for local authorities in managing the GECOP assessments

Further testing with an expanded cohort of local authorities, alongside the development of new resources, will meet these two research aims.

In addition, there is a need to conduct a full review of the standards, practices and targets contained in the Green Events Code of Practice (published October 2022), to ensure it meets the twin needs of a realistic environmental benchmark for events, as well as the ambition needed to meet the global environmental challenge.

Acknowledgements

This project has been delivered as a partnership between Julie's Bicycle (Richard Phillips, Project Manager), Vision for Sustainable Events (formerly Vision:2025) (Chris Johnson, Project Director) and Consultant Andrew Lansley (DATE Toolkit founder), on behalf of Vision for Sustainable Events .

It has been funded by Arts Council England, Earth Percent and participating local authorities.

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- Bristol City Council
- Colchester City Council
- Gloucester City Council
- Leicester City Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Maldon District Council
- Manchester City Council
- Norwich City Council
- Reading Borough Council
- West Northamptonshire Council

Special thanks to **Festival Republic** for supporting the development of the Green Events Code of Practice and taking an active role in the project partnership with Reading Borough Council with workshops and insights.

Thanks also to the many organisations that have supported the Green Events Code and this project in its development, through providing insights, reaching out to networks, and offering support letters which has helped to unlock Arts Council funding:

- Local Authority Event Organisers Group (LAEOG)
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- Live Industry Venues and Events (LIVE)
- UK Music
- Events Industry Forum (EIF)
- Without Walls Consortium
- Association of Independent Festivals (AIF)
- Manchester City Council (MCC)
- Promoters: Festival Republic, Factory International, Cheltenham Festivals, Manchester Jazz Festival, Sick! Productions, Wild Rumpus

With thanks to Anna Lansley, Laura Tapping, Lily Paulson and the students and staff of the University of Gloucestershire and Manchester Metropolitan University.

Appendix

1. The Green Events Code of Practice

Version 1.3: 1st May 2024

This code of conduct is intended to provide the UK with clear and robust [voluntary] **minimum standards** for sustainability practices for all stakeholders across the outdoor festivals and events industry - event organisers, local authorities, and supply chain, set in the context of industry-scale and national environmental aims and targets.

It represents a science-based approach aligned with relevant existing frameworks and initiatives where possible - global, national, and sector specific*.

It is understood that events vary in type, size, frequency, location, and maturity on their sustainability journey.

Principles

1. We need to act urgently on the climate crisis
2. We will act based on evidence – scientific targets and industry research
3. We are in this together - we commit to knowledge sharing within the industry
4. We will be transparent, reporting impacts annually
5. We will be ambitious and realistic, accepting not all climate-positive decisions will provide cost benefit in the short term, and striving to improve year on year

Overall Aim

Commit to a minimum of 50% reduction of GHG emissions by 2030* (scope 1 & 2, with additional targets for scope 3)

**baseline year first [normal] year of data available*

Minimum Standards, Practices and Targets

Governance

- Net zero emissions strategy and/or action plan in place to reduce impacts in line with overall targets, by the end of 2025
- Every organisation [size and type dependent TBC] reports impacts (including CO₂e) annually by the end of 2025
- Include sustainability as a key criterion in procurement policy and processes
- Identify a person responsible to lead on sustainability delivery

Energy

- Embed the Power Hierarchy in planning temporary energy supply
- 100% renewable electricity by the end of 2025 (venues, offices i.e. Green Tariff)
- 50% reduction in fossil fuel consumption at live events (onsite) by 2030

Travel and Transportation

- Put in place a plan by 2025 to reduce direct and stakeholder travel & transport emissions
- Work with stakeholders including audiences, contractors, artists, traders and partners to balance unavoidable travel/transport emissions and generate positive investment

Food & Drink

- Aim for at least a 30% reduction in meat and dairy consumption onsite by 2030*
- Establish a food and drinks policy with stated recognised standards
- Eliminate food waste and repurpose left-over edible food

**Source: National Food Strategy 2021*

Materials and waste

- Manage waste according to the Waste Hierarchy - avoiding waste, prioritising reuse, increasing recycling.
- Eliminate single-use plastic by 2027

Water

- Put in place a water conservation/saving plan by the end of 2025

Positive Influence

- Inspire positive change in behaviour with audiences, artists, supply chain, partners and sponsors, staff and local community
- Develop partnerships and/or creative programming on environment and climate themes
- Invest in positive climate, nature and social impact

2. Full List of Participating Events in the 2024 Pilot

Bristol

AJ Bell Great Bristol Run
Bristol Harbour Festival
Bristol Breakfast Rotary Club Dragon Boat Festival
Bristol Craft Beer Festival
Bristol Pride
Bristol Sounds
Love Saves the Day
Forwards

Colchester

80's Calling
Ibiza Orchestra
Sausage and Cider Festival
Anti Loo Roll Brigade

Gloucester

2000trees Festival
Kings Jam
Gloucester Goes Retro
Gloucester Pride
Gloucester Tall Ships

Leicester

Leicester Riverside Festival
Billy Bates Funfair
Leicester Mela

An Indian Summer
Leicester Pride
Run Leicester Festival

Liverpool

Africa Oye
Christmas Market
Lunar New Year
Service of Remembrance
Island of Foam

Maldon

Ufest

Manchester

Chinese New Year
Great Manchester Run
Parklife
Góbéfest
National Athletics Championships qualifiers
Manchester Day
Race for Life & Pretty Muddy
Heaton Park Food & Drink Festival
Caribbean Carnival
Davis Cup
WOMEX
Manchester Christmas Markets

Norwich

Norfolk and Norwich Festival
Norwich BID Wine Week
Euro 2024 Fan Village and associated events
Norwich Lord Mayors Weekend
Norwich Pride
Afri-Fest East
Wild Fields Festival
Norwich Foodies Festival
Norwich Run 10k
Summer Sessions
Save the Rave
Norwich Festive Lights Switch-on

Reading

Reading Festival
Reading Water Fest
Readipop
East Reading Festival
Reading Pride
Winter Wonderland
Raver Tots

West Northamptonshire

Tour of Britain
Shambala

3. Research limitations

- i. As part of this pilot, we were not able to fully evaluate how GECOP and the associated DATE Toolkit assessment could be integrated into different existing local authority processes (e.g. licenses, site permissions etc). Further research in this area is needed as part of next steps.
- ii. The specific details of GECOP were not tested at length. However, targets around plant based food & energy were highlighted as being the potentially most difficult to implement owing to cultural challenges and geographic location. A full review of the standards included in GECOP and how it aligns with DATE is needed as part of the next stage of this work.
- iii. For events taking place early in the year, it was not always possible to conduct an environmental assessment sufficiently in advance for event organisers to make changes. This is likely to have reduced the positive change figures in this report.
- iv. The assessment was carried out by most local authorities through close engagement with events, often where there was a good pre-existing relationship. Further research is needed to understand the impact of an assessment with events at scale, with less direct support.

About the Authors

- Richard Phillips** Climate Change Specialist for Music, Julie's Bicycle
Julie's Bicycle is a pioneering not-for-profit, mobilising the arts and culture to take action on the climate, nature and justice crisis. Founded by the music industry in 2007 and now working across the arts and culture, we have partnered with over 2000 organisations in the UK and internationally. Combining cultural and environmental expertise, Julie's Bicycle focuses on high-impact programmes and policy change to meet the climate crisis head-on.
- Chris Johnson** Co-founder and Chair, Vision for Sustainable Events (formerly Vision:2025) Events; Co-founder and Managing Director, Shambala Festival; Co-founder and CEO, onboard.earth
Established as a non-for profit group to promote climate action, through the provision of free-to access shared knowledge in 2010, Vision for Sustainable Events now represents over 1,000 event businesses through industry body stakeholders and leaders in the field of sustainability.
- Andrew Lansley** Co-creator of the DATE Toolkit; Consultant; Innovation Manager, Cheltenham Festivals; Senior Lecturer in Music Business, University of Gloucestershire
Andrew has worked for almost 30 years in cross sector roles including events, academia, politics, broadcast and innovation. Andrew established a neurodivergent consultancy following years of research and project delivery within creative ecosystems and cultural policy. The consultancy specialises in intersectional, regenerative projects internationally and Andrew continues his cross-sector work through interconnected, harmonised projects and practice.

Endnotes

- 1 <https://cape.mysociety.org/>
- 2 Aggregating the assessment scores across ten events held in three locations (Leicester, Manchester & Reading) where pre- and post-event assessments were carried out using DATE, there was average improvement by 25.54% when taking into account all areas of assessed practice. From the sample taken, six events evidenced a positive trend in "Event Score" (an average +45.66% rise), two events evidenced a negative trend (an average -9.3% drop) and two events achieved no change.