

Manchester Central 

ConferenceNews

Shaping a Sustainable Future



Sustainability report

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Stand and be counted

In today's market, it seems like you can't have a conversation without the topic of sustainability being brought up – and for good reason. Investing in the future of the industry should be high on the list of any organisation's priorities.

The tricky part for much of the industry is follow-through, as there is little guidance in how to be sustainable. That's why *Conference News* and Manchester Central have partnered up to research industry sentiment on sustainability, discover best practices and provide actionable insights wherever you are on your sustainability journey.

But why now? Sustainability is on the mind of many businesses the world over and the issue is becoming more and more urgent. The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) predicts there's a **48%** chance that global temperatures will exceed the 1.5 degree increase threshold set out by the Paris Climate Agreement.

The top line is that an overwhelming majority of the industry is investing in sustainability, in fact **74%** of our survey respondents believe annual budgets should find a place for sustainability. On top of this, **94%** believe sustainability will become a bigger part of their decision-making process in the next few years.

The message to suppliers is clear – get on the sustainability train now or be left behind by competitors who are ahead of the game. For organisers it's the same, soon, having an unsustainable event will not be good enough for attendees, exhibitors or industry figureheads.

Another action the industry needs to address is around auditing supply chains. While **40%** questioned believe that sustainability plays a part in their supply selection process, less than **20%** audit environmental claims made by the companies they work with, so it's clear little is being done to ensure that businesses are as green as they claim. If we are to escape the greenwashing labels, more needs to be done to hold suppliers to their word when it comes to their green credentials.

Sustainability is an ever-evolving topic, cost of living, energy prices and geopolitics have all changed drastically in the time we have been conducting our research. But sustainability's core competencies of transparency and innovation are evergreen.

Our whitepaper includes many more data points and actions for the industry to take, including the need to work with government to achieve sustainable goals and just how much of an annual budget should be set aside for sustainability. The message is clear – sustainability is here to stay.

The events industry impacts so many parts of the value chain, so many communities and so many industries, that it sits in a unique position to move the conversation around sustainability forward. By being collaborative and innovative, events can set the bar for other industries.



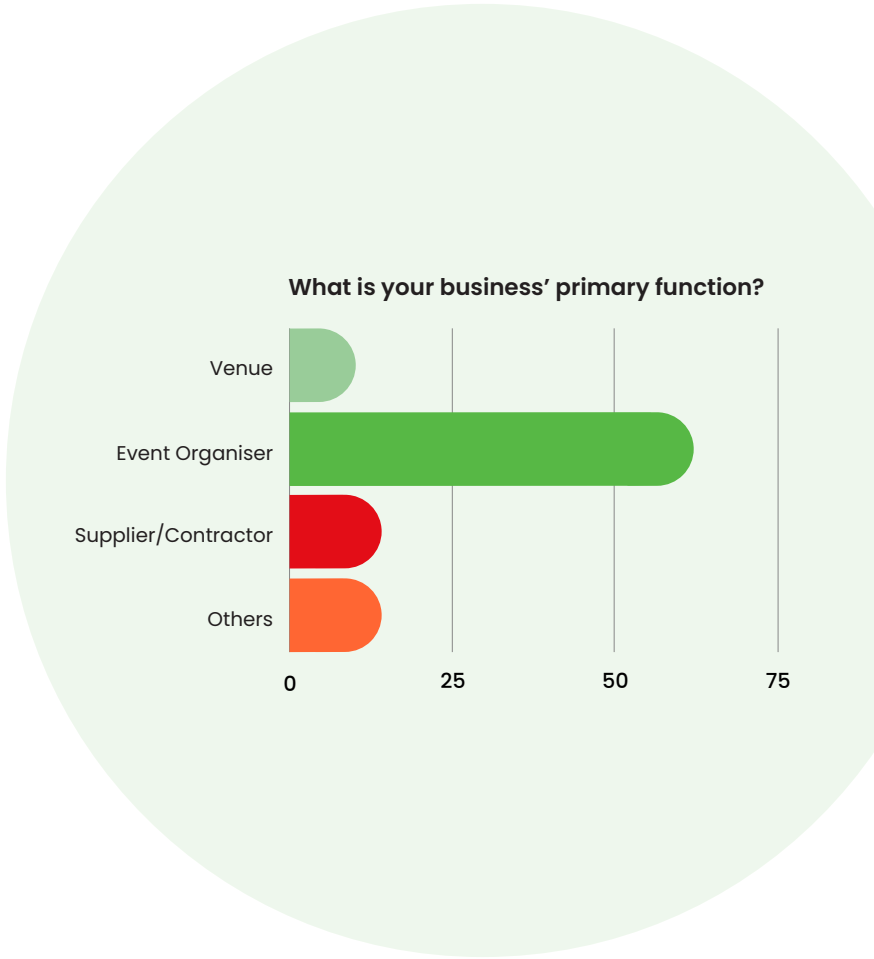
Martin Fullard
Editorial director
Conference News

Who we spoke to

The research within this report has been conducted jointly between *Conference News* and Manchester Central with the aim of providing actionable insights towards a sustainable future. This report brings together the findings from a variety of research methods, with contributions from a range of industry experts and survey participation from 150 industry professionals.

In addition to the in-depth industry survey, we conducted a number of social media polls on Twitter and LinkedIn, hosted a live discussion at International Confex and hosted a live roundtable discussion at Manchester Central with key event planners.

Combined with thoughts from industry leaders and sustainability experts, this report shares insights from across the events value chain.



Lauren Hudson
Sustainability and safety advisor
Manchester Central



Anna Abdelnoor
CEO and co-founder
Isla



Joseph Charlton
Founder and managing director
Planit



Shaun Hinds
Chief executive
Manchester Central



Peter Daniels
Managing director
Workgroup Events



Christianne Beck
Events and experiential sustainability consultant
Worlds Better

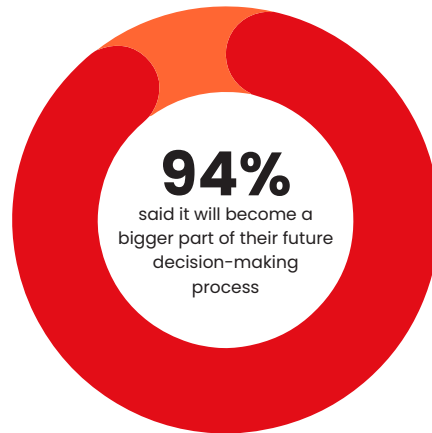
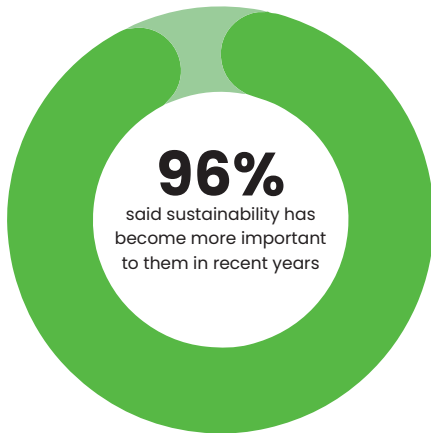


Matt Hagan
Executive chef
Manchester Central

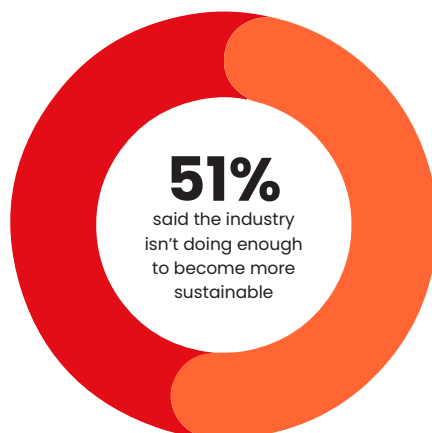
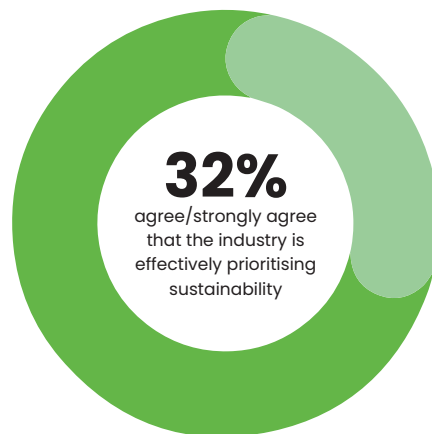
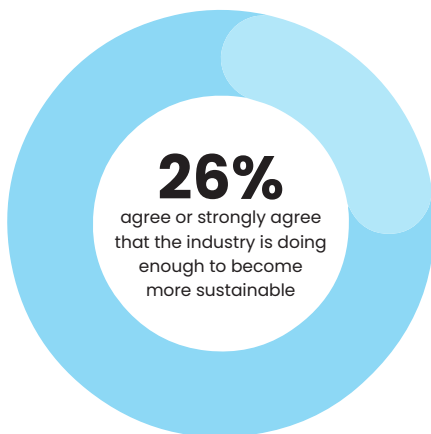


Becky Davison
Project manager
First Event

Why now?



Yet...



There are so many initiatives out there looking at sustainability. Perhaps this is no surprise given that **96%** of respondents said it was a priority that had become more important. Anecdotally, we'd heard the subject has been at the top of the agenda for the industry. So why do this survey and why benchmark the industry now?

It's not just events which are moving in this direction, the UK Government has an imperative to decarbonise all sectors to meet net zero targets by 2050. The Net Zero Strategy includes a plan for £40bn of investment, with the aim of pulling through low carbon technologies to maturity and scale.

It's not only in the UK however, the Paris Climate Agreement aims to make zero-carbon solutions viable across industries. The agreement also calls for collaboration across nations, with events being a multi-national community, it's perfectly placed to push the envelope for international sustainability.

The fact that so many survey respondents said sustainability has become more important to them in recent years shows the strength of feeling. But despite wider attention and a clear want for sustainable solutions, our survey indicates the events industry is struggling to implement real solutions.

The Net Zero Events Pledge, for example, has acknowledged that there is an urgent need to accelerate the journey to net zero within the events industry. However, only **25%** of respondents have signed up to the pledge so far, and only **26%** agree that the industry is doing enough to become more sustainable. So is the industry really doing enough to implement change?

One of the respondents proposed a reason for this, saying that: "After a difficult 18 months the importance of this [sustainability] has become secondary due to the difficulty in running shows." Another suggests that: "The sector lacks clear understanding of its carbon footprint and major emission sources."

This strikes a chord for many eventsprofs in the current climate, it's hard enough to bring delegates back to live events, but amidst rising costs and staff shortages, the sentiment of some is that sustainability will take a back seat.

But sustainability is here to stay, it's a long-term goal for many organisations that, fittingly, will define long-term success.

With this mix of a lack of direction and understanding, it's now vital that actionable insights are provided to eventprofs. The pandemic and our recovery may have caused a seismic shift to how our industry operates, but we need to find a way to ensure that sustainability remains at the forefront of event organisations' long-term goals. And this won't be easy in the face of the very real cost and inflationary challenges all businesses are grappling with. The key point to remember is that sustainability is not just for today, it's for our future.

"As a leading venue, we take our corporate, social and environmental responsibilities seriously, and our strategic ambition is to ensure sustainability is embedded into the heart of everything we do.

"Our story is one of renewal and re-use, being a venue reinvented from a derelict train station. We have continued this sustainability journey, and back in 2012 we began to collaborate with our stakeholders to learn and evolve our approach. That's why we have partnered with

Conference News to conduct in-depth industry research and activity, generating new insights and sharing solutions to accelerate sustainability across the industry.

"Emerging from the pandemic, it's clear that our industry has experienced lasting change. There has never been a more critical time to hone our efforts and collaboratively do all we can to address global issues and safeguard our future.

"We are passionate about embracing change and adopting new, innovative solutions that have legacy impacts. This research is intended to gather rich and comprehensive data, that provides real insight into how we can make a real difference and inform the next stage of our shared journey."

**Shaun Hinds,
Chief executive
Manchester Central**



Our findings: Within our organisations

Organisations are at the forefront of sustainability development – with cost, procurement and policies being key factors for events businesses

The cost

Cost was identified as a major roadblock for those surveyed, with nearly half believing that sustainability is cost prohibitive. Undoubtedly there's truth to this; investing in net zero solutions often comes with additional cost, with events running on such slim margins this can be a difficult prospect for many organisers, venues and suppliers. Invariably, the cost of doing 'the right thing' is greater.

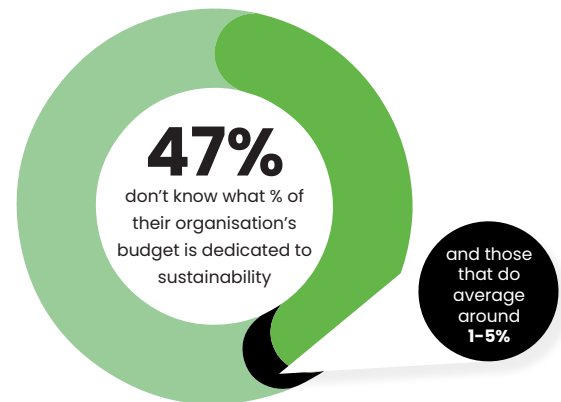
The thing to remember, is that in the not-so-distant future, sustainability will be a must for clients and suppliers. For example, nearly a third of those surveyed said sustainability heavily affects venue choice. So, investing now comes with a cost, but the cost of losing out on business in the future may be a far greater risk



for organisations to take. Those questioned understand that sustainability has cost implications – with only **5%** believing events businesses shouldn't need to commit a % of their budget to improving sustainability.

This shows a willingness from employees, so the onus is now on decision-makers to commit spend, as currently much of the industry is only committing a minimal amount of their budget to sustainability. The good news is that businesses will soon start to insist that sustainability is measured and featured in events they are supporting.

So ultimately the market will move in this direction, hence investing now to be better, could pay dividends



long term – as a venue, for example, you may be excluded from hosting certain events if you don't meet a certain standard.

One respondent said: "I think there's good work being done, but sustainability is often the first thing to go when budget runs out. It's not a top priority for clients."

"The good news is that budget holders will soon start to insist that sustainability is measured, so ultimately the market will move in this direction, hence investing now to be better could pay dividends long term."

**Shaun Hinds,
Chief executive
Manchester Central**

Knowledge and training

44% of respondents said educating and training staff is one of their biggest sustainability challenges, which could be one of the reasons why sustainability initiatives are slow, and there's a general lack of knowledge and understanding across the industry. **57%** of respondents said they hadn't received training around sustainability in their organisation and **54%** of businesses did not educate or train employees at all.

This lack of training likely impacts the progress of sustainable development for the industry so it could be a huge area of necessary focus. For those survey respondents who do implement training, the most popular method is through Isla training, carbon literacy training, CPD seminars and measuring KPIs through performance management.

Educating employees doesn't have to be difficult, or costly, either. Those actively involved in improving sustainability signaled that sustainability forms part of staff inductions and that sustainability information is shared through internal communication platforms and via quarterly staff briefings. They also promote engagement through lunch and learn sessions and focus groups led by in-house sustainability champions. Some companies even deliver training outside of their organisations, in local communities.

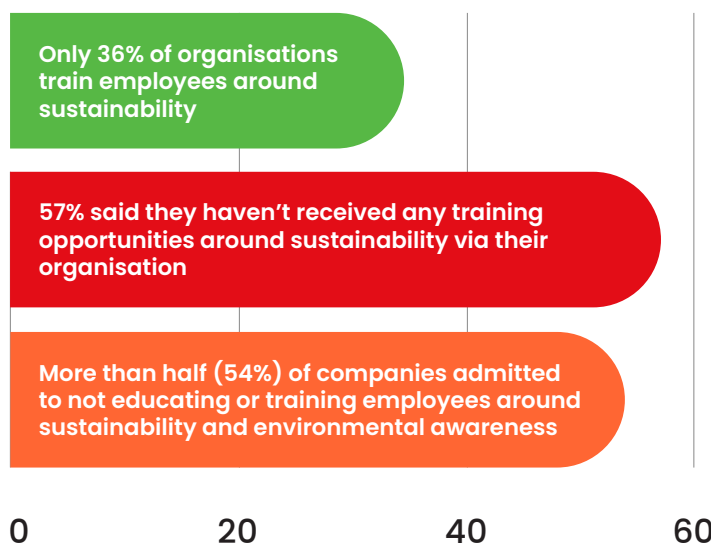
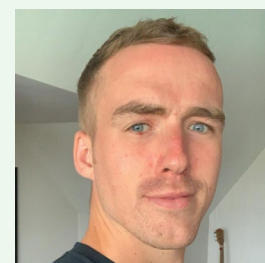
It's clear a high percentage of us are interested and bought into sustainability, in fact only **21%** of respondents said there was a lack of senior-level buy-in within their organisation and only **22%** reported a lack of commitment from their colleagues. So, if the interest and willingness to be more sustainable is

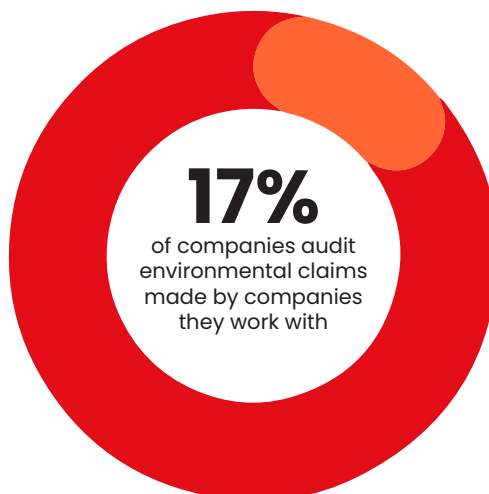
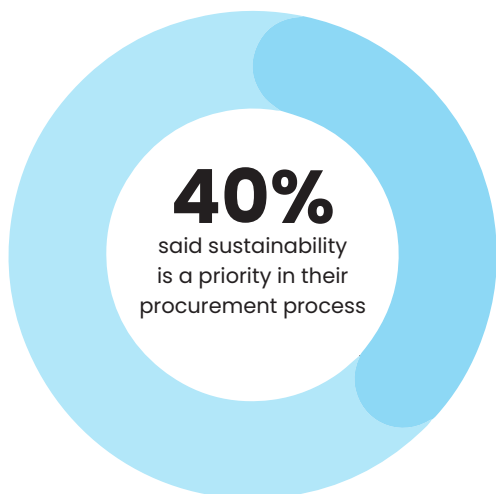
there, yet there's a lack of education and training, could this well be the answer to our sustainability problems?

Community is another aspect of sustainability that is often overlooked. Sustainability is about so much more than green credentials, giving back to local suppliers and supporting event graduates are key success metrics for businesses.

"We work with an internship programme called Rise, which is a paid internship for Manchester Metropolitan University students, who commit to 70-100 hours, supporting with research, sourcing and planning documentation. We're continuing for a second year because we believe in investing in the future and giving real opportunities to those who want to explore events. We want to create a sustainable model, supporting people at the start of their event journey."

Joseph Charlton
Founder and managing director
Planit





Procurement

A recurring theme in the research was the pressure on suppliers to be sustainable – after all, what’s the point in being sustainable if your supply chain isn’t?

Some organisations do look at sustainability when selecting venues and during the procurement process (35% and 40% respectively), however there’s clearly room for improvement. Often, when purchasing, many said they try to ensure this happens through detailed tender processes, sustainable procurement agreements and pledges, and proof of policies and commitment to zero carbon targets.

“It seems that businesses are really struggling to find resource to fulfil the amount of post pandemic events work coming in as it is, let alone finding the extra resource to support

sustainability as a workstream on top of that.”

Christianne Beck
Events and experiential sustainability consultant
Worlds Better



During the procurement process, it’s not only important to select sustainable suppliers, but also to audit their sustainable claims. Don’t just take green claims on face value – look deeper into your supply chain to ensure you are actually being sustainable. According to our survey, only 17% of the industry is doing this right now.

“We prioritise working with local, small-scale farmers and artisan suppliers, not only to ensure the highest quality, but the full traceability of all our food and produce. We will only source from those who share our commitment to sustainability, traditional farming methods and Fairtrade, and we visit each of them regularly as part of our audit process. Sourcing locally not only reduces our carbon footprint, it also makes sure that we create maximum value for our local economy.”

Matt Hagan
Executive chef
Manchester Central



Policies

Policies for sustainability should provide a framework for an organisation's green goals, but only 61% of those questioned said their organisation has a sustainability policy.

Considering 97% of the respondents think sustainability is becoming more and more important, surely policy must be in place to provide a framework for success?

In addition, only 55% of these organisations have waste management policies, despite this being the number one recorded priority for change. This could partly be down to some organisations being slower to adapt than others, or lack of resource and time, but it could also be indicative of a lack of follow through when identifying

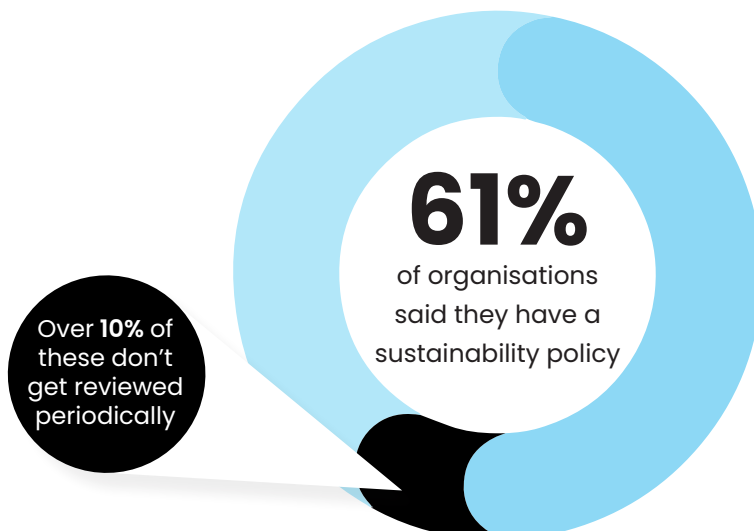
challenges, particularly as only 26% of organisations have actually signed a pledge of commitment to being net-zero. Again, is this a lack of understanding and education for us all, driven by a lack of time and budget?

When asked what venues can do better to support more sustainable events, a couple of suggestions included "insist on waste management policies", "introduce a green code of practice" and "don't even sell unsustainable options".

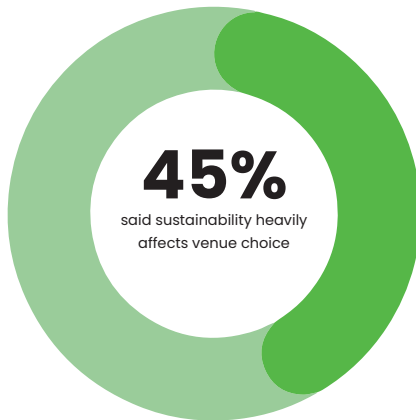
So, if all venues and suppliers were to have similar policies and standards, sustainability may no longer be a choice. While government mandate may not be the ideal motivator for many organisations, it does encourage an entire industry to move together.

"With the clock ticking towards the global goal of net zero by 2050, the events industry is waking up to the fact that it must transition towards a sustainable future if it wants to thrive in the coming decades. The hard work to get there begins now but there is a big leap to transition business as usual to a reality where all events have a 90% reduction in emissions as standard."

Anna Abdelnoor
CEO and co-founder
isla



Our findings: Venues and visitors



Events have a deep supply chain, with venues and exhibitors playing key roles in the industry, how can these key cogs remain sustainable?

Venues and visitors

For venues, waste management and sustainable accreditation, were both the top sustainability considerations when selecting venues, according to our survey respondents. The takeaway for venues here is that waste management infrastructure needs to be in place, and similarly, the takeaway for organisers is to have strategies in place from the start to reduce their event waste.

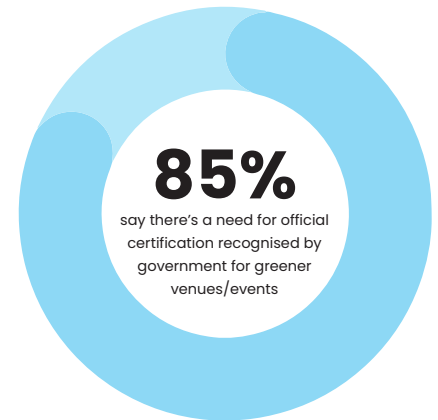
Our survey respondents named a few venues they believe are



doing it well, such as Forest Green Rovers, Exclusive Collection and the proclaimed energy neutral Hotel Jakarta in Amsterdam. Some events are also apparently setting the bar, including Shambala Festival and the Green Man festival. Just these few examples are enough to inspire, proving sustainability can be delivered without compromise.

Delegates also carry a responsibility. As individuals are becoming more aware of sustainability pressures, not only do we expect everyone to be more considerate of the environment, but we also have high expectations for the events and venues we visit.

Our respondents believe the best actions delegates can take when attending in-person events, is to travel by public transport, bring reusable water bottles and

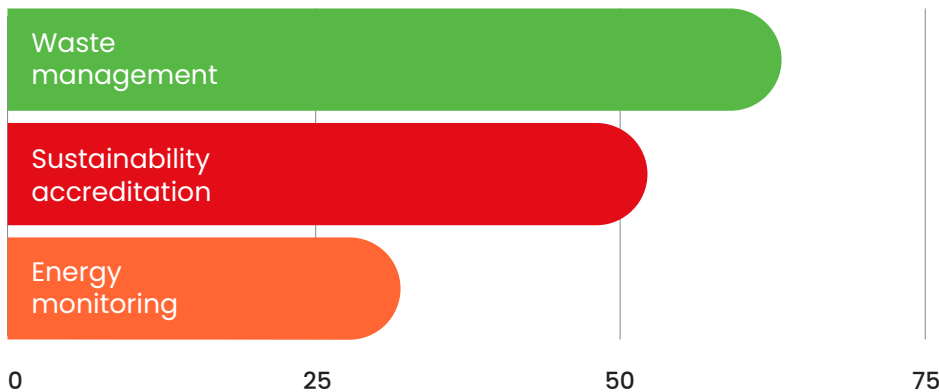


segregate their waste correctly. For organisers– this means choosing a venue with great transport links who also partner with local transport companies, water stations in plenty and easy to understand waste disposal bins.

Some even suggested the venues and organisers could offer incentives for those who travel by public transport. Maybe offering a free lunch upon showing your train ticket could be a good idea?

Some venues and organisers are already ahead of the game. With initiatives such as QR code entrances for delegates, BYO pricing incentive schemes and event apps rather than printed programs, there's already several innovative ideas we can take inspiration from to make the delegate journey more sustainable, and possibly even more fun.

When choosing a venue – top three sustainability considerations



It's also not just about the delegates travelling to the venue. Organisers visit a venue on multiple occasions prior to their event, so those venues with a virtual site visit offer a helpful solution, reducing not only carbon emissions, but equally costs and the time spent on travelling.

“Whilst Manchester Central and many other venues have made significant sustainable improvements such as diverting waste from landfill, replacing traditional lighting with LED, and installing permanent water towers, there is only so much our venues can do. We need to collaborate even further to ensure events are run as sustainably as possible and to ensure all delivery partners are on the same page. There are several ways we can make small additions or changes to the way we do things, such as engaging with a local charity to reduce event waste, or minimising heating or air conditioning during an event. Simple considerations like this

can make a huge difference and working together to implement them is key.”

**Lauren Hudson
Sustainability and safety
advisor
Manchester Central**



Exhibitors

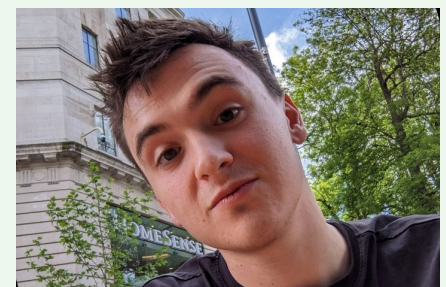
For exhibitors, according to our respondents, it's all about using reusable materials and leveraging digital signage to reduce waste. Showing a trend that the industry wants to see a change in the way stands are made and a demand for businesses to think ahead.

One survey respondent suggested exhibitors should be looking at lego block-style stand solutions that can be reused. Others suggested that

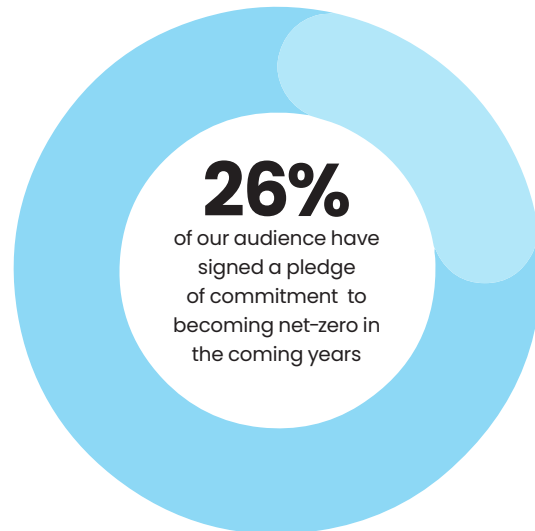
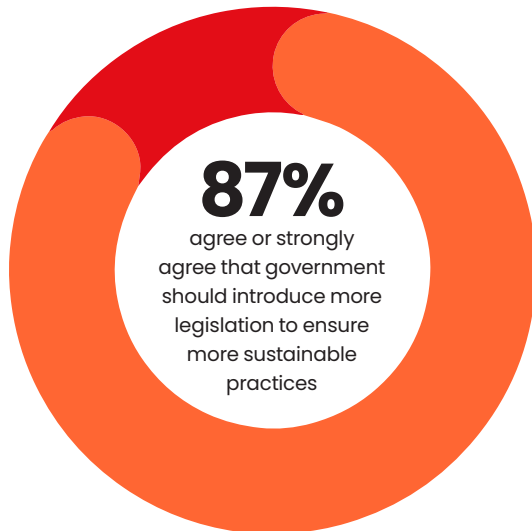
venues could take responsibility for this in their supplier vetting process, by insisting that exhibitors must have sustainability and waste management policies.

“Working with organisers and venues to source reusable stands, or exhibitors making the conscious effort to reuse material across multiple events, is the way forward. We are making great strides to change the way we make events, with more awareness of reusable materials and a change in mindset – the next step is to educate delegates on their impact.”

**Peter Daniels
Managing director
Workgroup Events**



Our findings: The wider picture



Government involvement and greenwashing concerns rank high on the influence list when discussing sustainable events

Government and legislation

The collaboration between events and the government is a priority for our audience, with over three quarters believing that it's both parties who should be responsible for protecting our environment.

While this collaboration is not common-all-garden, it's certainly not impossible. Think Protect Duty,

where the UK Government consulted with events businesses before putting together official proposals for event security legislation.

As to what form this collaboration would come in, 87% believe government should introduce legislation supporting sustainable practices. So, it's a seal of approval that the industry needs, based on in-depth scrutiny of the business' sustainable practices.

One roadblock for working with the government, is that events are not officially recognised as an industry itself, often falling under tourism and culture. This makes speaking about the seven sectors a challenge – but not an impossibility, as organisations

work to increase the visibility of events in the public eye.

"I wholeheartedly agree with the results that both parties are responsible for protecting our environment and future. There's only so much businesses can implement without the support from the government."

Becky Davison
Project manager
First Event



Greenwashing

Greenwashing is the concept of espousing one's green credentials, while not actually being sustainable when looking beneath the surface. It's not always intentional, but it can be a result of less-than-stellar oversight on supply chains.

Many sustainability initiatives dread the 'G-word'. Our research shows that, while it's the third highest option on the list of challenges for those surveyed, not a lot is being done to safeguard against it. This is evident as less than one in five of those businesses asked actually audit environmental claims made by companies they work with. The impact this has on sustainability goals cannot be overstated, with businesses mistakenly believing they are being green and not actively fact checking or measuring their claims.

So how do we avoid greenwashing? Is government action and legislation

the way forward? Or is it a matter of venues, suppliers and organisers being more transparent?

One of the respondents commented: "There is an element of 'all talk, no walk'. To find a readily available solution for sustainable exhibitions is just not there. Many organisations support sustainability verbally for the benefit of social media traction but once you delve deeper, there is very little physical action being taken."

It's not always easy to analyse the supply line for an event, but it requires a change in mind set.

"Greenwashing becomes a part of it when businesses aren't being held accountable for the promises they are making to clients or the industry to achieve the sustainability ambitions they are setting themselves – i.e. lip service.

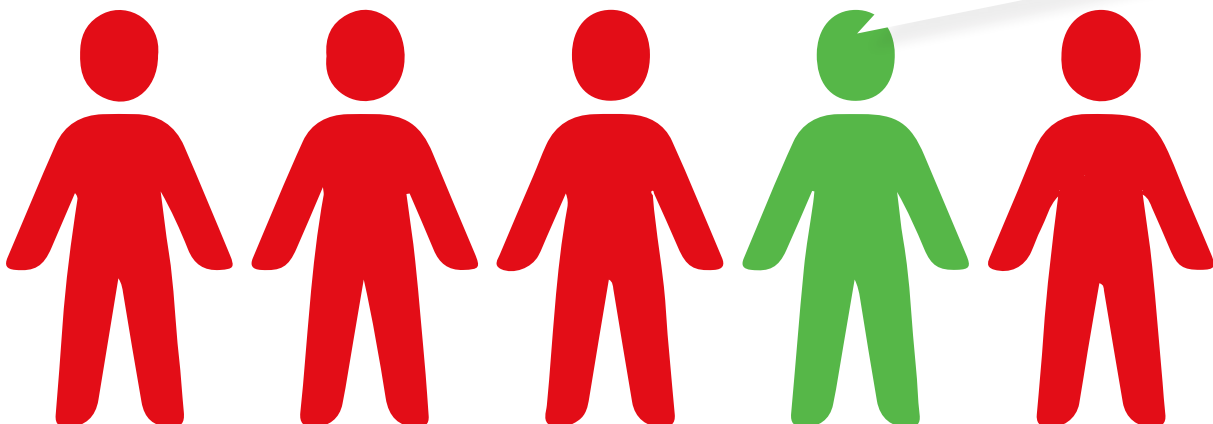
"The auditing question you

asked is a good one – auditing (along with provision of data to enable emissions measurement) should be built into supplier terms and conditions from the start as a mandatory requirement (much like health and safety documentation)."

Christianne Beck
Events and experiential
sustainability consultant
Worlds Better



Only 1 in 5
businesses
audit green
claims



The next steps...

Conference News and Manchester Central have collected the data, but it's up to the industry to enact real change. Here's a breakdown of the four core themes, emerging from the research.

Governing a better future

Despite the obvious want and need for sustainability to be taken more seriously, (87% agree government need to introduce legislation), it's clear the industry isn't doing enough, so would government intervention be the next step?

Some suggestions included tax breaks, industry legislation and benchmarking. The challenge with this, however, is that events themselves are not classed as an industry. Therefore, before we can push for industry legislation, more needs to be done to increase the industry's visibility within government.

For businesses, working towards a greener future now could potentially save you time and resource further down the line, however becoming 'accredited' or 'certified' is easier

said than done, as there's multiple options and routes to take. From lightbulbs, gas, cleaning products, food and wine, there's many recognised accreditations for businesses to invest in.

"I don't believe any business can be truly sustainable without having someone in place to implement and champion the businesses sustainability agenda. Within my role, I am able to ensure the business is operating with sustainability at the forefront of its activities, ensuring that Manchester Central has an achievable, but effective sustainability roadmap to follow. The business' sustainability steering group ensures there is a team championing ideas of innovation, education and collaboration."

Lauren Hudson
Sustainability and safety
advisor
Manchester Central



Recommendations

- › **Employ a sustainability champion.** Recruit or promote a champion within your business, large or small, to ensure you have someone in your organisation looking at things through a sustainability lens
- › **Get on-board.** All organisations need to commit to and sign a pledge to be net-zero to see a seismic change
- › **Develop rules.** Robust sustainability and waste management policies need to be implemented in all organisations, big and small, to get everyone pulling in the right direction.
- › **Pick your partners.** All organisations should be adopting sustainable procurement practice, with a view to filtering out any sustainable products and services.
- › **Drive industry visibility.** Do we take the lead as an industry and propose a workable framework to government for ratification? (For example, the All Secure Standard).
- › **Keep it simple.** Lobby for the creation and adoption of one simple, clear and combined industry green certification we can all work towards to achieve a clear benchmark for sustainability.



Educate to innovate

As reported, over half of employees have not yet received any training around sustainability, so how sustainable can you really be, realistically, if you don't have the knowledge or understanding?

Additionally, only **32%** feel that the industry is effectively prioritising sustainability, and two of the biggest reported challenges for the industry are lack of clarity and greenwashing.

As more businesses adopt sustainability policies and sign pledges and agreements to become net zero, it's vital that employees from top to bottom are fully aware of these goals and commitments, understanding their own responsibilities as individuals and employees, no matter their role, and therefore have the knowledge and education to deliver on this.

There's a clear desire from those surveyed that individuals want to become more sustainable and are taking action in their personal lives, however, with sustainability being such a complex matter, not everyone understands it in its entirety, and/or know where to start when it comes to their working practice and are therefore relying on their organisations to set the standards and examples.

Some organisations are good at this however, even delivering sustainability training within their community, so there's an opportunity to learn from each other and share best practices, addressing the fundamental issues that we all face personally and professionally, to achieve sustainability for the greater good.

Recommendations

- › **Educate your workforce.** Education around sustainability should be embedded into all areas of an organisation, from cleaning and office life, to transportation, logistics and event breakdowns. Every organisation and every department are different, so it's about looking at each area individually and assessing the sustainable improvement opportunities on a case-by-case basis.
- › **Learn from each other.** Sharing best practice within our organisations will help us all to become more knowledgeable organically. Internal communication platforms should be utilised, and regular forums and workshops will get people talking and sharing ideas. Many organisations out there may be doing a fantastic job of being sustainable, but unless employees

are educated about it the good work is very likely to go unnoticed.

- › **Collaborate.** Sharing stories externally is a recipe for innovation! As well as sharing best practice with delegates, exhibitors and suppliers, why not consider collaborating with local businesses, industry peers and charities – from tips on travel, waste management, new technologies and community engagement, learning from industries other than our own can spark new ideas for the world of events.
- › **Commit to training.** From workplace inductions to on-the-job training, we should continue to educate our employees throughout their time with us, to continually develop and improve our workforce.
- › **Be transparent.** It's ok not to be the best, and it's impossible to be 100% sustainable 100% of the time, but if we all try to be better and address the issues at hand, together we will become incrementally more sustainable, no matter what stage of the sustainability journey we're on. Making false claims about your sustainability credentials and achievements is not a winning strategy.



Investing in the future

94% believe sustainability will become a bigger part of their decision-making process in the next few years, yet, nearly half of those surveyed don't believe the industry is doing enough to be sustainable, so there's clearly a gap between the desire and need for more action.

“Being sustainable is inevitable for all businesses, so it's important to invest now for long-term success, or take the risk of being the only one who doesn't.

“The consequence of not investing in sustainable solutions now could be far more costly to businesses – commercially and reputationally –and for our planet, than the initial investment required.”

**Lauren Hudson
Sustainability and safety
advisor
Manchester Central**



With one of the main industry challenges being cost, events running on fine margins and the industry currently doing all it can to recover from the pandemic, budgets are rightly a concern.

Innovation, investment, and collaboration here is key. To be sustainable comes with the need for investment. If we can bite the bullet now and invest in new innovative technologies, processes and infrastructure, the cost in the long run could be outweighed.

Recommendations

- › **Invest.** Dedicate a percentage of your budgets or profits, and invest in future developments, training and initiatives. Without sustainable investment, what is the future?
 - › **Take ownership.** As organisers, we have a responsibility to share event information, communicating sustainable opportunities in advance, such as travel options and encouraging pre-event registration to save time on entry.
 - › **Limit choice.** By reducing the buffet options, and only providing sustainable plant-based options, we can reduce the amount of food waste and meat consumption.
 - › **Incentivise your delegates.** Reusable water bottles are one
- simple solution. But why not encourage sustainable travel, offering free coffees or lunch when presenting your train ticket? You might also plant a tree for every ticket sale, encouraging live attendance.
- › **Champion sustainable exhibitors.** Exhibitor waste is one of the biggest contributors at our events and therefore one of the biggest costs, so sustainable exhibitors could save you money in the long run, particularly if they invest in reusable stand materials, digital signage and e-business cards.
 - › **Choose sustainable venues.** Waste is one of the biggest factors in an event life-cycle, so work with venues who can help you reduce your waste by offering sustainable catering solutions and digital options to replace traditional print. Where waste is unavoidable, work with a venue who can manage your waste efficiently and effectively, sending zero waste to landfill. Many venues also offer virtual site visits, which helps reduce travel.
 - › **Select your suppliers wisely.** If we all opt for sustainable products and services, buying better and wasting less, the unsustainable suppliers will have no choice but to adapt and even innovate.



Inspire a change

40% of survey respondents said that sustainability is a priority within their procurement process, to ensure their supply chain is as sustainable as possible. Considering 94% said they expect sustainability to become a bigger part of their future decision-making process, this figure is slightly underwhelming. And even more concerning, only 17% said their organisations audit environmental claims made by companies they work with to avoid greenwashing, and many respondents said supply chain auditing was one of their organisation's biggest challenges. This tells us that organisations need to prioritise sustainable procurement as much as they do waste management and energy efficiency – as what's the point in being sustainable if everyone around you isn't?

The challenge, as always, comes back to cost. In today's climate, it's hard to not defer to the cheapest option. However, what if all organisations and suppliers were forced to be sustainable, and therefore price was no longer affected by how sustainable a product or service could be, the playing field would certainly become a lot more level.

Recommendations

- › **Create a policy.** By working with a sustainable procurement policy, you're setting a standard for your organisation that all suppliers must align to, ensuring your entire supply chain is as sustainable as you are.
- › **Be diligent.** Adopt robust methods to review and verify sustainability and environmental claims before approving and using suppliers.
- › **Measure up.** Audit the claims made by companies on a regular basis, opting for spot-checks, impact studies and carbon footprint tracking.
- › **Check yourselves.** Not only is it important to procure suppliers responsibly, but it's the follow through that counts – so audit yourselves, measure your impact and set KPIs and targets for improvement.

"If we've learnt one thing in recent years, it's that progress happens when people come together 'in the room'. It's how deals get done, how knowledge is shared and how we can really inspire change.

"Our industry is a diverse mix of some of the most innovative, adaptable and resilient stakeholders, who, when working together can achieve the most incredible things; from advances in technology, medical science and movements that change the course of our future.

"It's critical we do all we can to build a sustainable future for a sector that has been and will continue to be pivotal to our economic and societal growth.

"If we can all make incremental improvements as we work towards shared goals, we have the power to create lasting change."

**Shaun Hinds,
Chief executive
Manchester Central**



Summary

The key learning from this research, is that there's no easy, 'off the shelf' solution for the events industry to implement. It's up to each individual organisation to understand and assess where they can most improve, and then implement the right solutions that will make meaningful, measurable change. The themes that have emerged from our findings here will help us to narrow our focus to enable us to do this.

Sustainability is fast-becoming an imperative and not a choice. The four key pillars of government, education, investment and measurement will remain vital cogs for event sustainability for years to come.

"Events have so often been put to one side by government bodies, but the industry is a real driver for change. The reach of the events supply chain, as well as the innovative nature of organisers combine to make it well placed to lead the charge into a sustainable new world."

"Whilst roadblocks exist for events at large, many shows are run on the tightest of margins, we cannot forget our place as the innovators – it's our duty to push the sustainable agenda by being more conscious of who we work with, how we work and what impact our events leave."

"There is a real desire for change and to go green from the industry. The next step is to turn this desire into action, by utilising the insights in this report eventsprofs can show, once again, that our industry is a driving force for change."

Martin Fullard
Editorial director
Conference News



Government

Communicating with government has historically been a challenge for events. Working as an industry and being a unified voice for sustainable change will be critical for garnering support in the mainstream.



Education

Sustainability is needed from top to bottom in organisations, educating your workforce will help show off your green credentials. Committing to training on sustainability is the next step for many organisations.



Investment

Organisations committing spend towards being more sustainable now, will feel tangible benefits in the events landscape of tomorrow. Should sustainable practices be mandated, getting ahead is vital.



Measurement

Measuring the impact of sustainable goals is hard, cost is going to be a factor for many eventsprofs wanting to go green. Having policy in place and constantly striving to improve are key steps into maintaining success.