

UFI – Sustainable Development Awards 2020
Waste Management



Olympia London and The Grand Plan: Zero Waste to Landfill and Tackling Food Waste

Olympia London > olympia.london

Background

Recognising the event industry's impact on the environment by generating significant waste, Olympia London has incorporated sustainability at the core of everything we do.

One of Olympia London's biggest achievements to date is being a venue which has sent **zero waste to landfill for a decade by recycling more than 98%** and **converting the remainder into Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF)**.

Driving this success is Olympia London's '[Grand Plan](#)'. A staff-led, grass-roots initiative committed to the sustainability of the business by advocating green practices, connecting communities and empowering staff, service partners and event industry peers.



Background



The 'Grand Planners' are passionate volunteers and ambassadors from across our company, organisers, visitors and contractors. They focus on three areas: 'Community', 'Environment' and 'Education'. Their goal is to leave a positive impact and secure the long-term future of the business.

In 2019, The Grand Plan focused its attention on three objectives:

- **Increasing its recycling rate**
- **Reducing food waste**
- **Tackling single-use plastic**

Actions

Having these objectives in place Olympia London has worked with staff, organisers, exhibitors, contractors and industry associations in an all-round effort to educate, motivate and promote action on the three R's:

- **Reduce**
- **Reuse**
- **Recycle**



Actions – Reduce



Educational stand

Visitors educated with waste-management displays at various events, providing information on waste separation and recycling across the venue's waste streams



Plastics audit

The venue commissioned an independent audit to help map out what areas to tackle to eliminate single-use plastic, conducted by [MICE Machine](#), an organisation dedicated to supporting sustainability in the event industry



#20percentless

We signed up to MIA's (Meetings Industry Association) [pledge](#) to reduce single-use plastic

Actions – Reduce



Implemented a food waste reduction campaign in conjunction with charity [WRAP \(Waste and Resources Action Programme\)](#) via its national campaign [Guardians of Grub](#), engaging organisers, staff and catering partners



Raised awareness on sustainability in the event industry – in-house, in the press and industry via proactive PR and collaborative initiatives with partners



Olympia London was the first venue in the UK to provide exhibition organisers with comprehensive, [free sustainability reports after each event](#)



We took part in industry panels to share expertise and encourage others such as [The Meetings Show](#), [London & Partners](#) and [Greater London Authority](#)



Promoted collaboration across the UK events industry, by sponsoring workshops that resulted in a set of sustainability commitments for venues, organisers and contractors

Actions - Reduce



Olympia London, competitors and Powerday staff

Sharing expertise with the industry

By organising visits with industry peers to waste management partner [Powerday](#), the venue helped to educate and replicate the positive results in the industry. Powerday is one of the UK's most reputable recycling facilities. Together with [Haslehurst](#), our specialist partner in event waste management and recycling, they form an efficient partnership which has helped the venue to achieve and maintain its zero to landfill rate.

Competitor testimonial:

"It was really interesting to visit Powerday and hear about their processes. They are clearly passionate about recycling and keen to be the front runners in developing a zero-waste recycling model".

Alison Gannage-Stewart from South Bank Centre

Actions - Reduce



Launched a show-floor sustainable restaurant:

Available to exhibitions, the plant-based menu uses locally-sourced produce and mindful portioning to reduce food waste.

[House & Garden Festival](#) was the first event to bring Scully to life.

Bringing inspirational living to a stylish audience, the iconic show returned to Olympia London in 2019, partnering with our catering team to bring a new sustainable restaurant concept to life. Scully's menu was designed to reduce food waste (delivering *less than 2% waste, compared to a 37% industry average*) and meet consumer demand for a healthier and more sustainability-conscious offer.

Client testimonial:

"Attracting a wealthy and style and health-conscious group, House & Garden Festival was delighted to partner with Olympia London and bring Scully's restaurant to life. The plant-based menu and fresh approach to sustainability resonated with our audience. We were absolutely delighted with the feedback from visitors and exhibitors, and would like to bring Scully's to the show floor again." - *Mary Claire Boyd*
- Clarion Events

Actions – Reduce

Bespoke sustainable solutions with event organisers

Another example is working with a series of organisers on bespoke solutions to reduce food waste. Chosen by IBM to house its corporate event, Olympia London worked with the organiser to ensure the event produced zero food waste and was completely single-use plastic free.

Client testimonial:

“Sustainability was a huge consideration when choosing a venue and, partnering with Olympia London, enabled us to deliver an event that was our most sustainable event yet: no single-use plastic allowed onsite, guests were encouraged to bring their own water bottle – which they could then refill in the venue, free of charge and the carpet was specially chosen for its recycling properties while the catering menu too was carefully created ensuring everything was ethically sourced. Overall and where possible everything was reduced, reused or recycled.”

*Malcolm McLaren - Senior Client Partner - George P. Johnson Experience Marketing
Organising IBM's business event*

Actions - Reuse



Introduced Hydration Stations across our 7 spaces. Guests can refill containers for free and say goodbye to single-use plastic bottles



Olympia London helps organisers to reduce event waste and save money on waste management by raising awareness with contractors and exhibitors during build up and break down



Food surplus distributed in the community to those in need via partnerships with [City Harvest](#) and catering partners



Beyond its walls, Olympia London actively contributes towards a cleaner community, periodically sending cleaners to maintain neighbouring [Sinclair Road's Victorian conservation area](#)

Actions - Reuse



- Surplus furniture donated in the community and to charity partner – [Barons Court Project](#)
- Running for the second year, an internal “Reverse Advent Calendar” campaign donated clothing to local homeless and auctioned items to raise funds for a homeless charity

Actions - Recycle



Increased waste segregation at source by enhancing separation on site. This is done in collaboration with catering partners, organisers and installing dedicated bins on the showfloor, educating and encouraging visitors to separate recyclables, food and general waste



Continuous recycling programme with waste-management partners, including increased separated food waste going for anaerobic digestion, thereby reducing contamination and increasing recycling rate



Installing educational recycling stands on the show floor to inform and encourage guests and exhibitors



Reusable hot beverage cups encouraged with onsite retailers offering discounts on when using a non-disposable cup. The venue also partnered with [Simply Cups Recycling Scheme Membership](#) – the world's first and leading disposable cups recycling scheme



Enhancing volume of compacted waste to reduce the number of journeys to the local waste management site, contributing to reduced carbon emissions and financial savings to the business

Results, lessons learned and next steps...

The home of inspirational events, Olympia London continued to delight and inspire over 1.6 million visitors in 2019. Providing unrivalled heritage, location and listed architecture for 200 events, the venue recognises its responsibility in managing its impact on the environment.

In 2019, it expanded its programmes to empower and strengthen Olympia London's sustainability efforts, with results reaching beyond its walls and benefitting families, clients, the local community and the UK events industry as a whole.

Key lessons

Working in collaboration with, and motivating staff, organisers and catering partners has been instrumental in achieving impressive food waste reduction

Measuring food waste and accurately accounting food surplus has been reflected in a higher recycling rate and a substantial amount of food distributed in the community to those who need it the most

Results

-  Maintained sending zero waste to landfill in 2019 as we have each year for a decade now
-  Through our continued recycling efforts we have maintained our recycling rate at over 98%
-  Reduced food waste by 17% from Sept – Dec 2019: reported 43 tonnes collected in 2018 and 35.5 tonnes in 2019
-  The first venue in the UK offering a comprehensive post-event sustainability report to each exhibition, free of charge
-  Minimised single used plastic by abolishing plastic straws and cutlery, introducing a closed-loop coffee cup recycling scheme and water refill stations

Results

Partnered with organisers to develop *their* bespoke initiatives:



Brought plate waste down to virtually zero with a sustainable pop-up restaurant 'The Garden' at [Decorex event](#). Its carefully designed menu offered a majority of plant-based dishes, using locally sourced produce and mindful portioning which resulted in virtually zero plate waste



Delivered a zero food waste event for IBM with no single-use plastic




Distributed over 6,000 meals to those in need in the local community by partnering with [Speciality & Fine Food Fair](#)



Delivered less than 2% waste with new 'pop-up' restaurant with a plant-based menu at House & Garden show compared to a 37% industry average

Results

Recognitions in 2019:

-  [Green Tourism Gold](#) – the awards certification programme recognises businesses' commitment to become more sustainable. Olympia London was awarded with the highest seal of approval in 2019
-  [ISO 20121](#) – approved and recognised with this International Standard designed to help control events' social, economic and environmental impact.
-  [Business Green Sustainability Awards](#) – shortlisted Sustainability Team of the Year in this national award, competing with SKY and winner The National Trust
-  [Exhibition News Awards](#) – highly commended for the CSR category in this national event industry award

Next steps



Analysing the results of the plastics audit and implementing further single-use plastic reduction strategies



By sponsoring event industry sustainability workshops, Olympia London, is playing an active role to bring green practices to the forefront of event planning and management



Increasing our external engagement and communications including a Grand Plan video to visibly showcase our sustainability programme and share this expertise with the industry

Ends. Continue for appendices.

Appendix 1 – Resources

The Grand Plan
Report 2017–2018



[Olympia London sustainability annual report](#)

PUBLIC

Olympia London reduces food waste by 17%

Engaging organisers, catering partners and staff brought encouraging results only four months after launching successful all-round campaign.

ENTRANCE
Olympia Grand and National

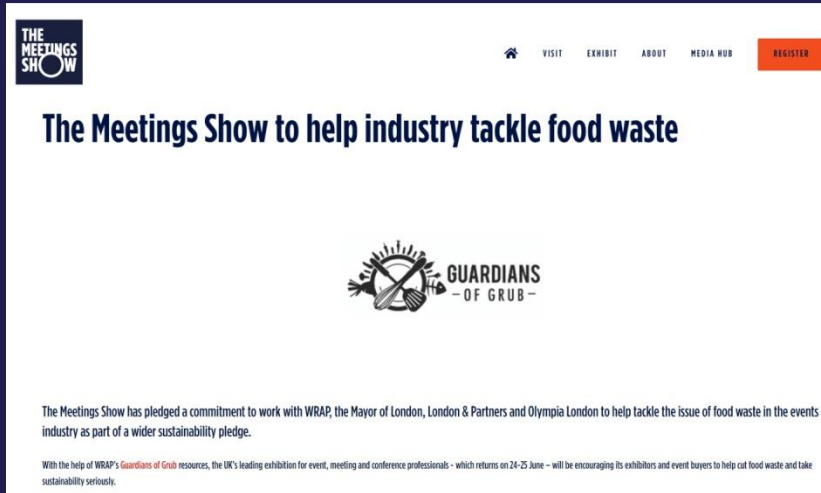


[Case study: Olympia London reduces 17% of food waste in collaboration with organisers](#)

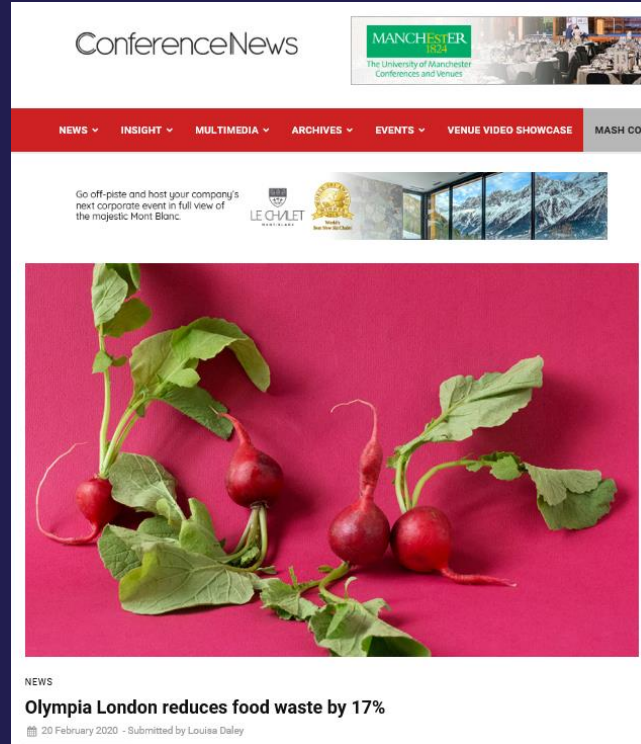
More:

- Olympia London's sustainable development policy [here](#).
- Olympia London sustainability page [here](#).
- Free post-exhibition sustainability report [here](#).

Appendix 2 – Press Coverage Examples



Raised awareness of food waste in a combined media strategy with The Meetings Show



Conference News: Olympia London tackling food waste



Exhibition World: "The venue sending zero waste to landfill for a decade"