

Holding an energy day

Guidance



1. Planning

Advance

Start thinking in detail about the event well in advance – and don't leave anything to the last minute! Don't try and do everything yourself, either. Organising a whole event can be a lot for one person to take on, so share out jobs. These could include:

advertising | booking | refreshments | resources | speakers | follow-up

Arrangements

What are the logistics of the event – have a think about where you might hold it, and how this could have an effect. What are the timings of the day? Make sure you have enough time between each event. And who's responsible for what? A detailed plan for the day is essential and should cover:

arriving | setting up | parking | introductions | workshops | resources | refreshments | packing up | instructions for exhibitors or speakers | contact numbers | ...and who's on washing-up duty

Money

If you've budgeted in advance you can try and fundraise to cover costs. You might hold a raffle, find a local business that will sponsor you, ask exhibitors to contribute (although non-profit organisations may not be able to afford this). Why not try approaching your local county, district, town or parish council or the Volunteer Development Agency, too? Green Communities can also identify possible small grants to help.

"Think outside the box"

Is it possible to make the focus of the event something other than energy? Can you try piggy-backing something else? You could try linking energy and sustainability to other issues like:

food and drink | DIY | home finances ('recession busters') | dieting | internet | film showings | even a clothes swap



What can you offer which will draw the crowds to your event?

2. Publicity

Spread the word

A brief press release for your local paper can really help – but keep it short and only include the most important points. Also send articles to local newsletters (parish magazines, school newsletters, etc.). And see if you can get in touch with the local radio station, too.

Leaflets and poster

Why not consider leafleting your town or village beforehand? If you can't afford the whole community, think of places where they might be read – cafes, libraries, pubs, etc. And try putting notices in public spaces, too; churches, schools, local supermarkets and community buildings.

Attention

Is there anything particularly inspiring or eye-catching about your event that will encourage people to come along? Ideas could include:

A prize draw | Games for children | Interesting speakers | Rewards for travelling sustainably | Guest appearances from someone famous | Free refreshments

And never underestimate how important the knowledge of free refreshments can be in persuading people to come along.

Know your community

Everyone wants to save money – but not everybody is into renewables or organic food! So if you're particularly keen to encourage the less green residents in your community along, pushing the sustainability angle probably won't have a huge impact on them. But telling them how much money they could save probably will!

Children's activities can also help here as you can promote the event as 'a family day out'. Then again, you could emphasise the workshops, speakers, or the opportunity to discover money and energy saving tips. Ask yourself: who do I want to come along?



Children at an event find out how solar pv works

3. The Event

Entrance fee

Make the event free – if you charge, it'll reduce numbers. There are many other ways to cover costs.

Exhibitors

Invite a range of exhibitors; from energy efficiency to renewables. Wildlife and conservation groups, travel schemes, gardening clubs, etc – all will be happy to take part as it can be a way to recruit members.

Appearance

Make the event look appealing. If you can get display equipment such as energy saving gadgets, insulation samples and solar panels for the public to see and touch you'll generate more interest.

Activities

A range of children's activities will draw parents in and could have the added bonus of helping children pick up tips about energy efficiency. Anything from bike powered smoothies to hooking rubber ducks from a paddling pool! CSE can help with our giant snakes and ladders board or solar spinning plate kits.

Talks

You might want to set up talks and information sessions throughout the day, or how about an 'ask the expert' surgery? Individuals could book a slot to ask for advice. But keep talks to a maximum of 15 mins each, otherwise the crowd may lose interest. CSE can help here with information resources.

Workshops and demonstrations

These can be great crowd pullers, for adults and children. Ask local people or groups what skills they can offer. Paper-making, face painting or t-shirt designs can all be energy and sustainability related. Or you could get really advanced with willow basket-making, home-grown cooking, or even dry-stone walling!

Entertainment

Do you know any local bands, choirs, comedians or other performers that could make an appearance? Be aware, though – noise could be an issue for stalls or activities nearby, so location is important.

Raffles and prize draws

These go down well, and could be good money-makers. They're great ways to get information from people if you want to do a follow-up in the future. Be aware of data protection issues – make sure any forms have somewhere for people to sign or tick to say they are happy for you to contact them.

Refreshments

These are essential. You need to offer tea, coffee and soft drinks (fair-trade and locally produced, if possible). Homemade cakes are a good draw – and people are often happy to donate if given notice. If you sell these the proceeds can go towards venue hire or other activities, even future campaigns. There are health and safety and food hygiene issues that need to be checked when offering food and drink.

4. The Event

Future events

Do you want to hear how successful people thought the day was? Feedback and comments could help you improve for next time. There are plenty of ways to do this:

questionnaires | a comments box | space on the wall for post-it notes | you could speak to people for verbal feedback during or after the event

Impact

You may want to find out how effective the event was at actually educating people about energy use or environmental issues. This could help with funding applications for your project.

Updates

You may want to hold further events, campaigns or schemes, and contact people to let them know this is going on. If so, you will need to keep hold of people's contact details safely and securely.

Data Protection

On the day, there may be lots of opportunities for you to get people to sign up to receive more information about your group – but be aware of data protection issues. If you collect names, email address, phone numbers and postal addresses you'll need to obtain permission to contact people again, don't pass them onto third parties, and keep them safe and secure.

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Getting people to put their ideas on a post-it note is a great way of recording their thoughts



5. More help

Marketing and publicity

If you need more help with your marketing and publicity, try:

- Ladder 4 Learning: PR for the Voluntary Sector: www.ladder4learning.org.uk/PR
- Friends of the Earth: write a press release: www.foe.co.uk/resource/how_tos/cyw_64_press_release.pdf
- istockphoto: for royalty-free stock photos and pictures (you'll need to pay): www.istockphoto.com

Funding

You can sign up to Green Communities for advice on hundreds of grants and funding ideas:

- Green Communities: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/cafe or call 0844 8480077

Data protection

For help with data protection and security issues, visit:

- The Information Commissioner's Office guide for charities: www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data_protection/detailed_specialist_guides/charities_and_marketing.pdf

Health and safety

There are numerous sources to help with health and safety advice:

- Food Standards Agency guidelines: www.eatwell.gov.uk/asksam/keepingfoodsafesamevents/
- Health and Safety Executive's '5 steps to risk assessment': www.hse.gov.uk/business/risk.htm
- Department for Communities and Local Government's Your Guide to Organising a Street Party or Fete: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/streetpartyguide?view=Standard

Information resources

CSE can help with a range of downloadable leaflets and resources on our website, including:

- Information about feed-in tariffs: www.cse.org.uk/app/webroot/downloads/file/feed-in_tariffs.pdf
- Energy saving tips: www.cse.org.uk/app/webroot/downloads/file/EnergySavingTips.pdf

Good luck holding your event!



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