



Making your Society more Sustainable – Guidance for Committees

Sustainability is an important part of The Union's activity, including the fantastic work of our student-led groups. From reducing the amount of paper or single-use plastics you use to volunteering in the local community, there are many ways you as a committee member can make the world a better place by making your society more sustainable in line with some of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This document contains some ideas and examples for how to make your society even more environmentally friendly and socially responsible!

Transport

Something to think about is how your members travel to and from where they need to go for society activity such as events and socials. You could reduce carbon emissions **and** save your members money by encouraging them to use sustainable forms of travel:

- If you don't have far to travel, consider walking or cycling places. It's great exercise and the most sustainable way to get around.
- If you've got further to go or are burdened with heavy or bulky kit and equipment, public transport might be a more appropriate form of travel. And for students, it's affordable too. You can buy Stagecoach and First student bus passes from The Union Finance office.
- Avoid driving or getting a taxi just for yourself. It's bad for the environment *and* your bank account. You can resolve this by carpooling or sharing taxis. Not only will it be cheaper per person, but filling a four-seater taxi rather than getting one each cuts your carbon emission by 75%.
- Is your society going abroad? While flying is faster, aeroplane travel is one of the worst contributors to climate change. The Union strongly advises that if your society is travelling abroad, you should choose a combination of coach and ferry instead of flying. Not only will it hurt the environment significantly less but it can also work out far cheaper for your members. Also, many hours on a coach with all your mates? Who doesn't want that!?

Flyering & Promotion

Question: Does anyone enjoy handing out flyers? More important question: Does anyone enjoy *being* flyered? When it comes to promotion of your society or events, it's easy to simply default to printing out hundreds of flyers, thinking that's a good way to get your message across. However, unless your society has solid evidence that flyers have led to an increase in memberships or attendance to an event, you may be throwing away cash and wasting paper with miniscule to zero benefit. Most flyers end up never handed out because of over ordering or in the bin without being read. There are so many more effective, environmentally friendly ways to promote your society:

- Instead of spending cash on printing, spend time developing your social media platforms. One of the first things people interested in a society or event do nowadays is search to see if they have a Facebook page or event. Not to mention you can sponsor posts to reach people not actively searching for you.
- If you are looking to promote a specific event, there's scope to get some airtime on the digital screens around The Union. Get in touch with s.u.marketing@mmu.ac.uk to find out more.
- Face-to-face interaction is the best way to engage others in meaningful conversations and get people's attention. Also, it's free!

Volunteering in the Local Community

Volunteering is defined as an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or group. People volunteer for many different reasons. They may choose to volunteer to develop skills or gain experience, to socialise or to give something back to society. They may also volunteer because they feel a moral duty or compelling reasons to take part in voluntary action or support a particular cause. Volunteering is a fantastic opportunity for societies to get involved with. Volunteering is also a great activity to mention on your CV. For more information, contact volunteering@mmu.ac.uk. You could collaborate with an external organization on a volunteering project or with a charity, volunteer in a school, deliver coaching to a youth club, hold a collection appeal for a foodbank, hold a shoebox appeal for children near Christmas, or run a session where you share your skills with the community.

Example of good practice: ISOC's 'Gift' Project



MMU ISOC have developed the 'Gift' community project where students are encouraged to gift their time, knowledge and skills to the wider community. Projects fall under four themes: environment, education, basic needs and social wellbeing.

- For environment, they have ran volunteer days at Platt Fields Park where students have planted bulbs, painted benches, litter-picked and more.
- Under education, they are looking to set up a volunteer mentor project where students can help refugees apply to university. This is in partnership with Cornerstone, a day centre that provides services to disadvantaged adults.
- For basic needs, ISOC have ran a series of food bank collections and are planning an 'essentials' collection for the homeless. This has been in partnership with Centrepont.
- Finally, for social wellbeing, they are hoping to set up a wellbeing walk with refugees with Manchester City of Sanctuary, as well as social clubs with the elderly with Manchester Cares.

The Gift community project is an amazing example of how a society can organise its members to give back to the local community in a big way. You can find out more about the

Gift project here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/giftproject/>

Reducing waste

Depending on the nature of your society, your events, activities or socials might involve using certain props, decorations, items of clothing, food, costumes etc. If this is the case, be conscious about how much you are buying in the first place and try to find a home for anything you don't need any more that isn't the bin. Some ideas for how to reduce waste such as this:

- Donate items of clothing or costumes to a local charity shop, swap shop event or a reuse scheme such as the British Heart Foundation's donation bins (found in The Union foyer).
- Ask other societies if they could make use of anything you don't need anymore.
- Rewind to when you're buying stuff in the first place. Ask yourself; do you *really* need this? How much will it actually add to the event or activity? Do you already own something that would do the job? Could you borrow something from someone else?
- Try to avoid single-use plastics as much as possible. Take balloons for example. They look nice for all of a couple of hours and then go in the bin. Consider making decorations from upcycled materials or recyclable materials such as paper. Even better, something reusable like a painted canvas or banner?
- Do you have a committee member with a particularly large cellar? They could offer to store things there. This is especially useful for things you might use again for a future or recurring event; you won't have to buy it again, saving you money and reducing your environmental impact. *Just remember to find a new home for it before the end of the housing contract.*
- Remember you can safely store things in the Opportunities Store Room on Level 1. Just head into Opportunities Office and ask for the keys.

Example of good practice: DON8 IT!



In 2021, student led project, DON8 IT! Revolved around students donating kitchen items during the end of their residency in halls. They dropped off their items at The Union collection point, which were then given away to new students during a Free Shop during Welcome Week. This was a great way to recycle unwanted kitchen and to provide free items to underprivileged students.

General Advice/Ideas

- Nominate one or more of your committee members to be a sustainability champion, add sustainability into the responsibilities of one an existing committee position or even create a new sustainability committee role! Any of these three would help to ensure someone takes ownership of making sure your society is as environmentally friendly as possible.
- If you do something green or that gives back to the local community, don't keep it a secret –shout about it! Get in touch with other clubs and societies, tell the Opportunities team or your Sports Officer who can share your success or, most importantly, inform your members! This way, your great work can inspire others to do the same or give someone a great idea on how they can improve their society.

Key Contacts

- Societies & Development Officer – s.u.socdev@mmu.ac.uk
- Opportunities Team – s.u.societies@mmu.ac.uk
- Volunteering Team - volunteering@mmu.ac.uk
- Project Coordinator – makechange@mmu.ac.uk

Information

- Sustainability at The Union – <https://www.theunionmmu.org/sustainability>
- UN's Sustainable Development Goals – <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>