

6. Sustainability



This sheet looks at sustainability, what it is and how to make your actions more sustainable.

To create the kind of world we want for ourselves and for our children we need to consider what we do, how we do it and what effect it will have on other people and the environment. In other words, is it sustainable?

Consider: reducing pollution, conserving energy and reducing waste. What effect might your plan have on the wildlife present?

FOSSIL FUELS

These are fuels made from plants and animals which have become fossilised over geological time. Oil, gas, coal and peat are all fossil fuels. The gases produced from burning fossil fuels contribute towards climate change and are generally polluting. We use fossil fuels to power our cars, to run other motors (strimmers and mowers) and to produce much of our national electricity.

Peat, which is used in many commercial composts, comes from peat bogs and is a fossil fuel. By digging up peat for use in compost the greenhouse gases stored within it will be released. If you need to buy compost then look for the words PEAT FREE on the bag. Compost which does not say this clearly will almost definitely contain peat.

Air miles: as well as the fossil fuels used directly, consider the 'hidden fuel' or air miles that products have travelled. Sometimes there can be a local equivalent; for example buy British or European apples rather than apples from New Zealand.

WOOD

Timber, paper and charcoal can come from forests which are managed sustainably, which means that when trees are felled they are replaced with young trees.

It is easy to buy wood from managed forests; timber merchants are now used to being asked about this. Look for the forest-friendly FSC mark (Forest Stewardship Council).



Ash

Don't forget to consider where the wood in other products such as charcoal and paper comes from.

CHEMICALS

You may need to use chemicals on your site – a preservative for a fence perhaps or paint for woodwork or metal. Think whether you do need to use a chemical and if you do, try to find one which will not be harmful to the environment. There are various preservatives for sale which have active ingredients made from plant derivatives.

GENERALLY REDUCE

You may wish to think more generally about what you do and how you work. Try and reduce the amount you buy as well as the fossil fuel energy you use:

- Consider borrowing or hiring tools.
- If buying, what about second-hand?
- If buying new, look for high quality that will last and can be maintained and repaired.
- Avoid short life or disposable items.

MANUFACTURE

Do you know how the items that you are buying were made? Were the materials manufactured in a way which was not polluting or destructive of the environment? What are the living and working conditions of the people making them?

Sometimes the problems of pollution take place in another country where laws are less strong or less well enforced. You may wish to consider the living and working conditions of the people involved in manufacture and of the people living nearby.

Many people believe that to be truly sustainable we need to consider the welfare of all of the people in the world.

THINK ABOUT WASTE

Sustainability includes the whole life of something. What happens to it after you have finished with it?

REDUCE the amount of waste

REUSE where possible

RECYCLE whatever you cannot use

It is now possible to recycle a great deal. Think

INVOLVING PEOPLE

6. Sustainability

about putting out recycling bins at events. This encourages your visitors to separate their own waste, which saves you an unpleasant job and shows that you care about waste.

BECOMING MORE SUSTAINABLE

Once you start to consider sustainability the list of things to think about can seem long and you may feel powerless. Don't try to tackle all of these issues in one go; take them one at a time.

For example:

You are planning a work party to replace some sections of a fence with new planks and to treat the whole fence with a preservative. Following this there will be a shared meal cooked on a barbecue.

Consider:

- Where have the planks for your fence come from? Look for the FSC logo and UK or European timber.
- What sort of preservative will you be using on the

fence, and can you use an environmentally friendly one?

- What sort of a barbecue are you using? Try to avoid disposable.
- Where has the barbecue charcoal come from? Charcoal from UK woodlands is harvested sustainably and burns really well.
- Are you supplying cups and plates? Can people bring them from home? If you need disposable ones use paper not plastic.
- What food will you be cooking and where has it come from? Can you shop locally?

The fact that your group exists and cares for the churchyard or burial ground is, in itself, a great achievement and one to be celebrated.

Regular management and maintenance by a group of local volunteers who share responsibility and involve their community is a very sustainable way to look after a burial ground.



Useful contacts

Alliance of Religions and Conservation, www.arcworld.org

Eco-Congregation, www.ecocongregation.org

Centre for Alternative Technology, www.cat.org.uk

Christian Ecology Link, www.christian-ecology.org.uk

ChurchCare, www.churchcare.org.uk

Church in Wales, www.churchinwales.org.uk

Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, www.envirolink.org

Quakers for Sustainability, www.livingwitness.org.uk

Shrinking the Footprint, www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint

Women's Environmental Network, www.wen.org.uk