

# BS 8901:2007 Specification for a sustainable event management system

## **BS 8901:2007 Specification for a sustainable event management system with guidance for use** sets out the

requirements for planning and managing sustainable events of all sizes and types, supplemented by guidance on how to meet, and surpass, these requirements. BS 8901 encompasses the entire range of events ranging from large scale conferences and unique events such as the 2012 Olympics to music festivals and air shows. It is aimed at:

- Event organizers
- Venues
- Organizations and/or individuals in the supply chain

BS 8901 provides guidance in the form of easy to understand practical information designed to assist the user to implement the requirements and those in event management to manage their environmental, financial and social risks and impacts spanning all aspects of event management.

BS 8901 can help:

- Companies to improve sustainability performance within available budgets
- Reduce carbon emissions and waste, improving the resource efficiency of the entire event supply chain
- Present opportunities for more efficient planning and encourage the re-use of equipment and infrastructure
- Users take stock of the environmental impacts such as carbon footprint, waste management and effects on biodiversity; social impacts such as community involvement and fair employment; and economic impacts such as local investment and long-term viability.

To order your copy of BS 8901, please visit [www.bsi-global.com/BS8901](http://www.bsi-global.com/BS8901).

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## EC&O Venues



EC&O Venues is one of the UK's premier exhibition and conference venue managers. The business comprises Earls Court, Olympia and the Brewery, three of London's leading venues for exhibitions, conferences and special events. The three venues hold over 1000 events each year, attracting over 3.8 million visitors and 30,000 exhibiting companies.

Emma Wellman is the Sustainability Advisor of EC&O Venues and its Halls Services Manager for Olympia. She explains: "When I saw how much waste they were burying in the ground in the exhibitions industry, I was appalled. So we started to change things here three years ago. We realized how small change could make a big difference, and also what a big difference we could

make by getting together as an industry. So with the Association of Event Venues a Sustainability Group was set up to share information on best practice, which led to my involvement with BS 8901."

The key sustainability issues faced by EC&O Venues are: pollution to land through the waste generated within the exhibition halls; pollution to air from CO<sub>2</sub> from heating, cooling and lighting, and pollution from diesel and petrol vehicles; noise pollution from events; issues with MDF; the possibility of water pollution from spillages or inappropriate disposal of paint or cooking oils; and the relatively tiny impacts of the administration offices.



# BS 8901 Sustainable Events Management Case Study

## Implementation

EC&O's implementation of BS 8901 began with getting buy-in from senior management and the directors of the company, which Emma Wellman describes as the most important thing she needed to do.

Next, EC&O wrote a Sustainable Development Policy and identified its stakeholder groups: local residents, suppliers, the big exhibition organizers and the local authority. Explains Wellman: "We sent them a copy of the Sustainable Development Policy, with a response matrix, asking them to tell us how it might affect their working at the venue, the issues and concerns it raised or if there was any way we could help them improve their sustainability while they're working with us."

Taking feedback into account, EC&O then started to look at all its environmental impacts, assessing their severity and associated risks to help derive objectives to work towards. These included formalizing benchmarking and developing a plan for on-going measurement. Another key objective was raising much more awareness about the concept of sustainable events with organizers.

Says Emma Wellman: "It's important to remember, the standard asks us to look at the part we play in events. We have to keep coming back to the fact that we are the venue - a supplier of space. We have a huge impact because we are responsible for supplying energy, water and catering to organizers and for taking away waste. But essentially when an organizer comes here, what they do with the space is their responsibility."

The next phase was to look at the mechanics of putting in place what needed to be done to meet the objectives. Having identified that working with its organizers was key, EC&O has made sustainability part of its first contact with clients at contract stage. This way, organizers at the highest level have information on EC&O's sustainability policies.

Says Wellman: "We cannot tell organizers what to do about their show, and no matter how unsustainable their event, our bit of that show will be the most sustainable we can make it. However, if an organizer says, 'We really want to work with you to make it the most sustainable we can', fantastic, we will give them every support."

To that end, once contracts are issued, sustainability is now being highlighted in the sales and marketing pack and letters go out from the events team which liaises with organizers, giving more information, setting out approved wording for the organizers' manuals to their exhibitors and above all, offering help.

Emma Wellman recognizes that change can be a long process, and that pre-existing contracts with service partners and organizers cannot be amended. However, new contracts can, and in these organizers are notified on new excessive waste levels, for which disposal costs will be charged to cover EC&O's additional expenses. This has the effect of making organizers more aware of the volume of materials they bring and it also reduces the amount of waste material they leave behind.

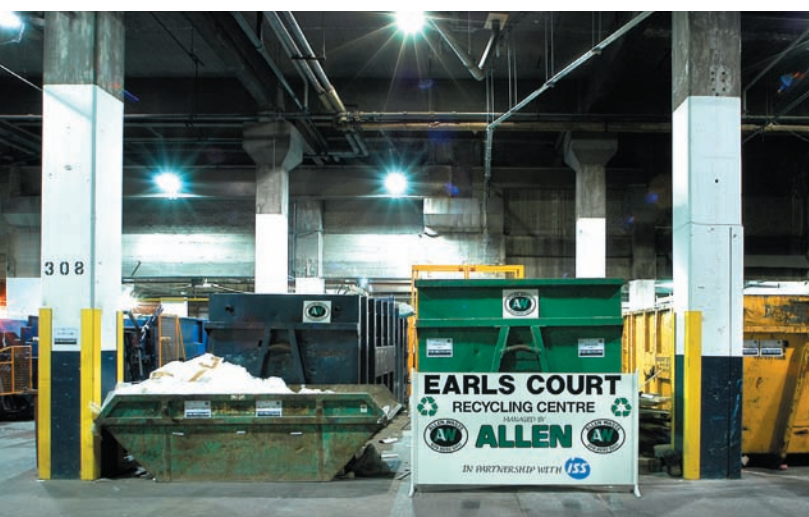
Similarly, 'Turn-off time' procedures have been tightened up and thoroughly communicated to organizers. This means that, unless other arrangements are made, stand power is turned off 30 minutes after a show ends, as are the hall and car park lights. This simple provision saves a significant amount of energy.

## Learning

EC&O has been monitoring its annual energy usage and waste streams for three years now, so recycling and energy reduction plans are already in place, and are continually reassessed. Three years ago, nearly 100 per cent of waste went to landfill. That figure is now around 50 per cent, with the rest being diverted. Emma Wellman explains: "We separate out as much as we can but when time or space prohibits sorting, it's sent to transfer stations. We rely on waste-to-energy plants where they recover the energy through burning. We also have big grey bins for bottles and paper for our visitors. Sometimes we sell waste – things like plastic, cardboard or cabling with a copper core. This helps to off-set the costs incurred in setting up and running the sorting operation."

EC&O has also started rolling out a series of training sessions for its staff to educate everyone about the issues and to help them make sense of the changes they are being asked to make, from the events management team to car park attendants and cleaners.

In addition, EC&O is preparing reports which will give feedback to organizers. These will cover gas and electricity usage, and waste, and include comments on other factors which have an impact, such as if EC&O has had to use additional and more stringent cleaners to remove specific stains or make extra provision to tackle extraordinary waste, such as fake snow.



Finally, EC&O is gathering feedback about the implementation, and beginning to engage with its service partners on what they are doing. Emma Wellman says: "We can't fully insist on things until contracts are renewed, but we want to put our service partners on notice now about the ways we want them to work to improve their sustainability going forward."

## Benefits of the standard

Using the standard has broadened EC&O's outlook from a largely environmental one to a wider focus on sustainability as a whole, including its commercial and social aspects. One outcome is that some activity is more community based than before, such as the distribution of 380 chairs left over from an event which EC&O gave to a local recycling group for local housing projects and community centres.

The standard has also formalized EC&O's policies and thinking on sustainability and given it a clear set of requirements – a roadmap on how to approach implementing a sustainability management system.

It has had the benefit of making EC&O reassess its management systems, going through each of them to consider sustainability in every area. All department heads are now involved in improving the sustainability of their departments. Comments Emma Wellman: "It's a good process, because it's always good to think about what you're doing and why you are doing it and it has put sustainability higher up on everybody's agenda. We are making sustainability part of the way we operate rather than an add-on."

EC&O Venues also believes it will gain some competitive advantage from implementing the standard and becoming more attractive to certain organizers. Emma Wellman notes: "Sustainability is becoming so central to the agenda of big companies that in fact every single 2012 Olympics sponsor asked about sustainability plans." She adds: "Also, organizers are very cost driven. When it comes to signing contracts, if they are getting pressure to be more sustainable, the easiest thing they can do is choose the venues and suppliers who have already got BS 8901. The certification has done the work for them."

Financially, there is a known landfill tax saving, and eventually there will be a significant saving on energy. Emma Wellman admits: "I don't think anyone would do this if you didn't save money long term to be honest. We will adopt it first because it's the right thing to do, and second because there is a cost benefit and a commercial gain to be made."

## Conclusion

Holding BS 8901 certification may become a requirement of doing business with EC&O Venues for suppliers in the future. Working with certified suppliers, says Emma Wellman, "They will recognize the systems we've put in place and will be talking the same language."

Her advice to anyone contemplating the standard is simple: "Do it. If you have any questions find someone to help you. It does require work and a bit of time, but it is worth doing. I really believe that working this way, we will find sensible, constructive ways of reducing the impacts of our industry and that way we'll safeguard its future."

## Further information

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**Emma Wellman**  
Sustainability Advisor of EC&O Venues