

The Royal Horticultural Halls, naturally

Natural England is a non-departmental public body set up to conserve and enhance the natural environment, so when its annual Delivering As One Organisation (DAOO) conference came round, organisers wanted to make the event as sustainable as possible, as well as having a venue that sat well with their culture and ethos.

Communications senior specialist at Natural England, Lorna Wilamowski, explains: "We chose the Royal Horticultural Halls and Conference Centre for the London event because not only is it a stunning building, but the horticultural aspect complemented our values. Also, the fact that it is so central and accessible was great, as it encouraged guests to use public transport."

Previously, the conference was held in several venues and all attendees were invited to attend at their closest location, but the number of guests meant that some events had to be spread over a few days to accommodate everyone. "This year we wanted to try to avoid staff and



RHH delivering a low-emission format

speakers having to travel long distances in order to reduce our carbon footprint," says Wilamowski.

DAOO was set up to celebrate and share best practice and this year the show was held across seven different locations simultaneously linked through video conferencing. With 280 guests in the Lawrence Hall and 2,000 guests nationwide, this new format meant that

the average emissions per person were reduced from 15.3kg in 2007 to 9.9kg in 2008, with an overall reduction of 7.8 tonnes, or 31 per cent, on the previous year's event.

Senior sales manager at the Halls, Rudo White, says: "This was the first time the show's organisers had used a live interactive link so we wanted everything to run as smoothly as possible, and it did. The use of the live link is definitely the way forward for large organisations spread over a wide geographic area. Not only does it save travelling time and expenses, it is also good for their carbon footprint."

Last year, the Prince of Wales' May Day Summit also went to the Halls, according to White, having recognised the efforts the RHH is putting into become a sustainable venue. The natural light, locally sourced food and the fact that the RHH supports and encourages green living, whether that be recycling or gardening, are all factors that clients have attributed to choosing the Halls and Conference Centre.

Vegetative state for UKPHA

The UK Public Health Association will make this year's conference 100 per cent vegetarian in a bid to reduce its carbon footprint. The decision followed an independent report conducted into the organisation's two-day conference at ACC Liverpool in April last year.

Experts calculated the event generated a total of 113 tonnes of carbon dioxide – which to counteract would require the planting of a 38-hectare forest. Meat served to delegates was identified as a significant contributor to the conference's carbon consumption.

The study, by sustainability consultancy Best Foot Forward, also showed that delegate travel was the worst offender, making up 54 per cent of the event's carbon footprint.

The conference also created 21 tonnes of carbon through the use of electricity, gas and water over the two days.

The report recommended the UKPHA should consider reducing the amount of paper issued to delegates as well as using teleconferencing facilities for those long haul guests forced to travel by air.

BT Convention Centre manager Jacquie Rogers says the venue is committed to being one of the most sustainable venues in Europe. "We have introduced a range of measures to maximise our performance in this area, including installing technology within the building which allows clients to measure how green their events are."

Chief executive of UKPHA, Angela

Mawle, says: "We certainly have made changes to the 2009 Forum in response to the report.

"We were surprised that meat consumption had such a significant impact and so have made the decision to go completely vegetarian. This decision has been supported by our members who are 2:1 in favour of a totally vegetarian diet.

"We will be maximising the use of electronic communication at the Forum to cut paper consumption by approximately 75 per cent.

"Delegates will be encouraged to use public transport and to car-share where the use of a car is unavoidable. Train travel will be actively promoted as an alternative to flights."