



Sustainability Newsletter

Issue 7: March 2020

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Making Council-run events more Sustainable



Street events are a brilliant way to bring the community together. They get people of all ages, abilities, faiths and backgrounds together to enjoy our wonderful City. Our three popular annual street events take place at Albantide in June, as part of the Food and Drink Festival in September, and to kick off the festive shopping season in November. They provide spaces for local artists to perform and act as incubators for startup business owners who trade their wares there. They're part of what makes St Albans District such a great place to live.

But have you ever thought about the environmental cost of throwing a huge party for up to 18,000 people at a time? Cont...

MAKING COUNCIL-RUN EVENTS MORE SUSTAINABLE

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Because of the fantastic variety of food and drinks available at these events, with traders serving intriguing and exotic fare from all parts of the world, single-use serving containers are still in use. But a surprisingly small amount of the waste generated ends up being recycled.



When you recycle at home, you sift, sort and separate all your recyclables, rinsing them and presenting them carefully in the right bins. But in an event context, all it takes is a few people disposing of the wrong things in the wrong place, or failing to get rid of enough leftover food, for a whole binful of recycling to get contaminated and consigned to landfill.



So we vowed to double our efforts. We took a close look at our sustainability policy and here's what we were able to put in place for the next event, the Food and Drink 'Feastival' in September:



- We removed as many single-use plastics from the event as possible.
- We banned the use of polystyrene containers, plastic cups, cutlery, plates, coffee stirrers, drinks bottles, bags, straws and takeaway packaging.
- We offered traders the use of reusable Festival cups. Then we ferried them back and forth to be washed in the Council offices after each use.
- We recommended that traders use recyclable options such as aluminium containers and cardboard boxes that contain a liner so that they do not become so contaminated with leftover food that they can't be recycled alongside other cardboard.
- 'Compostable' receptacles such as cellophane bags and 'Vegware' food containers can only be disposed of by... you guessed it... composting. Food waste is NOT composted, it's broken down anaerobically – that is, without oxygen – so you can't mix compostable food containers with food waste. As any gardener will tell you, a good compost heap is a carefully controlled ecosystem and the fact is that there aren't enough large-scale composting units around the country. We still encouraged traders to use Vegware and Bioware compostable containers. We separated and collected these in order to be able to assess the volumes. Our hope is to feed back this information into the industry as they work towards finding disposal solutions for the future.

MAKING COUNCIL-RUN EVENTS MORE SUSTAINABLE

- On the event day, in order to ensure the recyclables stayed recyclable, we mobilised huge teams of volunteers (including Councillors and Council staff) to watch the bins for any signs of misuse.
- We also created reusable bin 'toppers' in the hope that this would make the message of what should be in there impossible to miss.

This resulted in us being able to recycle more of our waste, and the scheme was hailed as a great success.

We'd like to cut the amount of rubbish that goes to landfill even further. Have you got any ideas? We don't *think* we can ask you to bring along your own picnicware to our events (where would you wash them up so you could come back for more?). It would be great to involve more volunteers to keep a closer eye on the bins, and help with the cup washing. If you would like to volunteer to help out, please email events@stalbans.gov.uk. We'll definitely be able to find you a job, and you'll have great fun working as part of a team to deliver something really special for the community.

Our events are a wonderful chance to celebrate the things we hold in common. The music, the laughter, the good food, the spectacle of a juggler on a balmy summer's afternoon, the fun of the fair on a frosty November night. But we don't want this to cost the Earth!

"Congratulations on getting those cups sorted this year. It can't have been easy at all. We think it's a great idea plus the bin situation was so much clearer and the message very clear so hopefully there was a major difference compared to the last Feastival." Trader



BUSTING THE HOME HEATING MYTHS

How you use your heating will have a major effect on your bills, your levels of comfort and on your environmental impact. What are the facts?

Myth: I've been with my supplier for many years and I benefit from being a loyal customer.

Truth: If you haven't switched your energy tariff in the last 2 years, you are most likely paying much more than you need to for your energy. Sadly, energy suppliers tend to reward *new* customers rather than loyal customers. Make sure you use an Ofgem accredited switching service to find a better deal:
www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/how-switch-energy-supplier-and-shop-better-deal.

Myth: It's cheaper to leave the heating on all day at a low temperature than set it to come on at certain times.

Truth: False. It's cheaper and more effective to put the heating on only when you need it. You will be wasting money

and burning fuel unnecessarily otherwise.

Myth: Turning the thermostat up heats the room quicker.

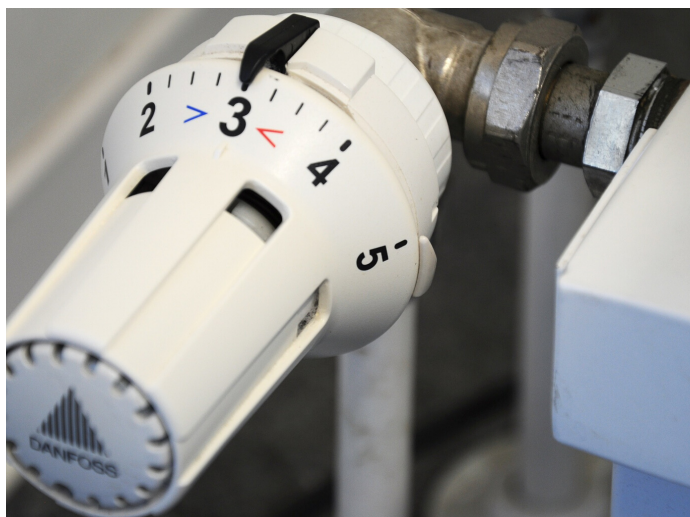
Truth: The thermostat maintains a constant temperature of the room. Turning it up doesn't mean it heats up any quicker because boilers only have one speed. It will just eventually get hotter and you'll probably then need to open the windows! Room thermostats monitor the warmth in specific rooms and adjust the boiler operations accordingly. Your room thermostats should be set to the lowest comfortable temperature. Guidelines suggest 18-21°C. You don't need to turn your thermostat up when it is colder outside, as the house will still be heated to the same temperature.

Myth: By heating my water all day I ensure I have a constant supply when I need it.

Truth: Water heated in the morning should stay hot until midday provided the tank is insulated properly. It's more efficient to heat your water for 30mins in the morning and in the evening than leave it on all day. The only exception is if you are on an Economy 7 or 10 tariff, then it's cheaper to heat the water at night.

Myth: It's more efficient to use an electric heater in the room I'm in than use the central heating.

Truth: Electric heaters are the most expensive way of heating any home. It is always cheaper to put the central heating on and preferably turn down the thermostatic radiator valves in rooms you are not using.



GET INVOLVED WITH LOCAL TREES

Become a Tree Warden

For a number of years now the District Council has been involved with the Tree Warden Scheme, a national initiative coordinated by the Tree Council. The District currently has around 50 volunteer wardens, and new recruits are always needed.

Tree Wardens get involved in a range of activities, from practical projects such as planting and caring for trees, to gathering information about local trees and creating imaginative projects to encourage others, including schoolchildren, to value their local trees and woods.

Wardens are also active in the District, acting as the eyes and ears of their neighbourhoods and reporting on matters such as the condition of trees, pests and diseases, and safety issues.

Other activities include leading guided walks, giving talks to local community groups and spearheading Tree Council initiatives such as the Ancient Tree Hunt, National Tree Week and seed gathering.

You don't need to be an expert on trees to become a tree warden. It's a great way to learn more about trees with like-minded people.

Sponsor a Tree

If you don't have space in your garden to plant a tree, you can still support tree planting in the District. The Council, in partnership with the Civic Society, runs a tree sponsorship scheme.

For between £150-250, a tree can be planted on your behalf in one of the District's Parks or Open Spaces. And the Civic Society will produce an illustration of your chosen tree with a dedication or message to loved one. The illustration will be included in the Tree Sponsorship Book, available to view at the Civic Centre.

If you would like to volunteer your services as a Tree Warden, or for further information about tree sponsorship, please contact us at trees@stalbans.gov.uk or ring 01727 866100.



The Right Tree in the Right Place

A great way to help wildlife and combat climate change is to plant new trees. In urban areas, trees also help reduce pollution and provide shade during the summer months. But with so many different types of tree available, it can be difficult to decide what to plant.

What trees to plant?

While some trees, such as fruit varieties, may not get bigger than 5m height, others such as Oaks can grow to well over 20m! So it's important to consider eventual size of the tree and the space available to plant. If in doubt, a

reputable tree nursery should be able to advise.

Native trees which grow wild in Britain, are particularly good at attracting and supporting wildlife and, particularly in rural areas, they integrate well with the landscape. Smaller native trees include; Hawthorn, Hazel, Field Maple and Silver Birch. But if you have the space why not go for Oak, Hornbeam, Wild Cherry or Beech.

Fruit trees can be a good option for small gardens, and many Apple and Pear varieties are available on dwarf rootstocks that

prevent them growing too big. Choosing a local Hertfordshire variety will help preserve our orchard heritage and provide a welcome bounty of fruit in the autumn.

Nut trees can also provide a valuable crop and a healthy source of protein.

Cobnut (a type of Hazel) a small shrubby tree, native to Britain is a good choice. Introduced trees such as Walnut and Sweet Chestnut produce excellent edible nuts, but do grow into large trees.



Free trees for schools and community groups!

Community groups and schools can get free trees from the Woodland Trust:
<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/>

Attention: Herts Warmer Homes Scheme closes 31st March 2020

Herts Warmer Homes is a county-wide scheme that uses funding from energy suppliers, District and County Councils and a local charity, to help people stay warm in their homes.

The scheme provides new boilers, boiler repairs and insulation to those who are identified to be vulnerable and at risk from the cold.

Eligibility is assessed by looking at income, health, vulnerability to the cold and current energy efficiency of the home.

Often the people who need help the most do not put themselves forward

for help so we urge people to look out for neighbours, friends, relatives and contacts who could benefit and might not know about the scheme.

The scheme is closing at the end of March so please ensure that you refer yourself or others to the scheme soon.

It takes some time for surveys to be completed and installations completed, so we advise applying as soon as possible.

To find out more and apply, contact **Yes Energy Solutions** on **01422 880100**



Save paper by switching to electronic Council Tax billing

You can now save waste by opting to receive your bills electronically through your [MyStAlbans account](#). Simply sign in to your account, follow the instructions to link your Council Tax account and select the option to receive your bills via email.

You can also check your balance, download bills, make payments, or inform us if something has changed.

We now have over 5,000 residents signed up to ebilling. This is helping us to save paper, reduce printing and postage costs and

reduce waste. Please help us reduce waste by signing up today via your My StAlbans account.

Further information about setting up a 'MyStAlbans' Account is available at www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans.

News Bites

Understanding where the heat loss is in your home

Sustainable St Albans loans out thermal imaging cameras to local residents who wish to understand where the heat is leaking out of their home.

They are easy and free to use. Just book onto their free information session for some basic training on using the camera and to understand what you see. You may then borrow a camera overnight.

Sessions are held in St Albans and Harpenden through the winter months.

Visit

www.sustainablestalbens.org for times and details.



A new scheme Playing Out comes to St Albans

Wouldn't it be nice if children could play together on the streets like in the good old days? Well now they can!

'Playing Out' is a grassroots movement being run by 'Sustainable St Albans'. The aim is to help neighbours organise road closure days so that residents can come together to meet, chat and play.

This is a great way to get to know your neighbours and make new friends. Streets might organise games and activities together or simply socialise while the children

play.

Interested residents should submit their applications a few months before the actual road closure. There is no cost to residents and a street can be closed on no more than eight occasions a year.

For further information visit:

www.sustainablestalbens.org/get-started/playingout/.

This newsletter contains information about living more sustainably and is brought to you by the Sustainability Team at St Albans City and District Council. The information provided is not an endorsement of any of the products, sources of information or organisations mentioned.

For inquiries or comments, please contact sustainability@stalbens.gov.uk.