

ESG REPORT

December 2024

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ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL & GOVERNANCE REPORT



A message from our leadership team



At the Association of Event Organisers (AEO), we continue to make strides to enhance the sustainability and inclusivity of our products and services. This ESG report outlines our ongoing commitment to creating a more equitable and responsible industry, reflecting on our progress and ambitions for the future.

Diversity and inclusivity remain at the heart of our strategy as we continue to broaden our scope and impact. We began with gender monitoring across our activities over a decade ago, and since laid a strong foundation for more comprehensive diversity measures. Key initiatives include:

Judging panels: We've refined the AEO Excellence Awards judging process, ensuring a balance of industry insiders and external experts who bring both relevant experience and a genuine interest in events. This enriches the process while maintaining its credibility and relevance.

Speaker programmes: We are committed to achieving at least 1/5th of speakers representing protected characteristics across our event line-ups, promoting representation that mirrors the breadth of our industry.

Working groups: Our working groups continue to grow in diversity, encouraging different perspectives that drive innovation and inclusivity across all our initiatives.

Board rotation: To nurture inclusivity of thought, we've implemented a two-term limit for Board members, followed by a mandatory break. Confidential voting has also been introduced to ensure fairness and openness in appointments.

Carbon reduction: We have committed to measure, reduce and report the carbon generated from our business activities, our events, and our delegate travel – and share our learnings with members on our journey. In addition we have committed to create a carbon budget and invest in climate action to take accountability for the carbon our activities create.

While we celebrate these achievements, we acknowledge there is always more to do. This report is both a reflection on our progress and a call to action for continued collaboration as we build a sustainable, inclusive future for the events industry.

Together, we will keep raising the bar.



Anna Golden
CEO



Sarah Scott
Director of
Events &
Operations



Carmen Searle
Head of
Marketing



Lauren Petchell
Head of
Projects

Executive summary

> Environmental achievements:

- > **Carbon footprint reduction:** 2024 emissions decreased by 23% from 2023; per attendee emissions down 13.75%.
- > **Sustainability initiatives:** Expanded carbon action guides; introduced a climate budget; enhanced focus on sustainable supplier selection and event practices.
- > **Net zero commitment:** Aligned with the net zero carbon events initiative to achieve net zero by 2050.

> Social highlights:

- > **Diversity, equity & inclusion:** Ensured 20% of speakers represent protected characteristics; DEI initiatives integrated across events, mentoring, and Board rotations.
- > **Accessibility & well-being:** Detailed venue information, quiet spaces, and sustainable food options provided; Mental Health First Aid training completed by the team.
- > **Membership engagement:** +22% participation in working groups; 518 award entries received; won Silver for Best Membership Engagement at the Association Excellence Awards.

> Governance milestones:

- > **Enhanced leadership practices:** Introduced confidential voting and term limits for Board roles to foster inclusivity of thought.
- > **Advocacy successes:** Strengthened relationships with policymakers; launched member resources for advocacy; contributed to UKEVENTS and international partnerships.
- > **Transparency & accountability:** Established regular meetings and reporting structures to drive collaboration and continuous improvement.

> Strategic focus:

- > **Inform, adopt, promote:** A clear framework underpinning environmental, social, and governance initiatives.
- > **Sustainability leadership:** Continued emphasis on reducing carbon emissions and supporting member transitions to more sustainable practices.

Together, these initiatives underscore AEO's commitment to building a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future for the events industry.

2024 - at a glance



+6%

18 working groups



+18%

79 working group meetings 2024



+22%

Working group member participation from 2023



Total not recorded in 2023

13,822 social followers



+13%

102 AEO members



+22%

11 events



-6%

1,863 event attendees



+19%

518 AEO Excellence & People's Awards entries



SILVER

BEST MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

Won the silver award for Best Membership Engagement at the Association Excellence Awards 2024. Hosted by the Global Conferences Network, it is a highly respected award that highlights best practice throughout British and European associations.

AEO strategy

Inform, adopt, promote

This is what the terms Environmental, Social & Governance mean to AEO, and how we have woven them into what the association stands for.

The overall theme created to promote ESG is inform, adopt & promote.

Environmental

- Co-curate the best practices for sustainability
- Share content and case studies via the sustainability hub
- Adopt via our own actions

Social

- Drive knowledge, awareness and change via DEI hub
- Lead change via our own events and activities
- Drive content and action via talent hub

Governance

- Continue to drive recognition for the sector
- Broaden our network of influence
- Push our manifesto & asks to government, opposition and officials

Environmental strategy

Sustainability commitments

We have developed a framework for event professionals to achieve a constant baseline for sustainable performance. These enable members to measure and compare progress.

Supplier selection

At all AEO events, we choose suppliers that share our commitment to lowering environmental impact.

Collaborative efforts

Our members are offered the chance to join our cross association and AEO sustainability working groups - their goal is to share and collaborate with other members to create practical, sustainable tools to reduce emissions across member events.

Taking accountability for our carbon footprint

We invest in carbon reduction projects while we're on our journey to net zero. Each year we create a climate budget, aligned with our emissions, and invest it in projects with the maximum impact to the community.

AEO supports the net zero carbon events initiative, which was designed to move the events industry to net zero by 2050.



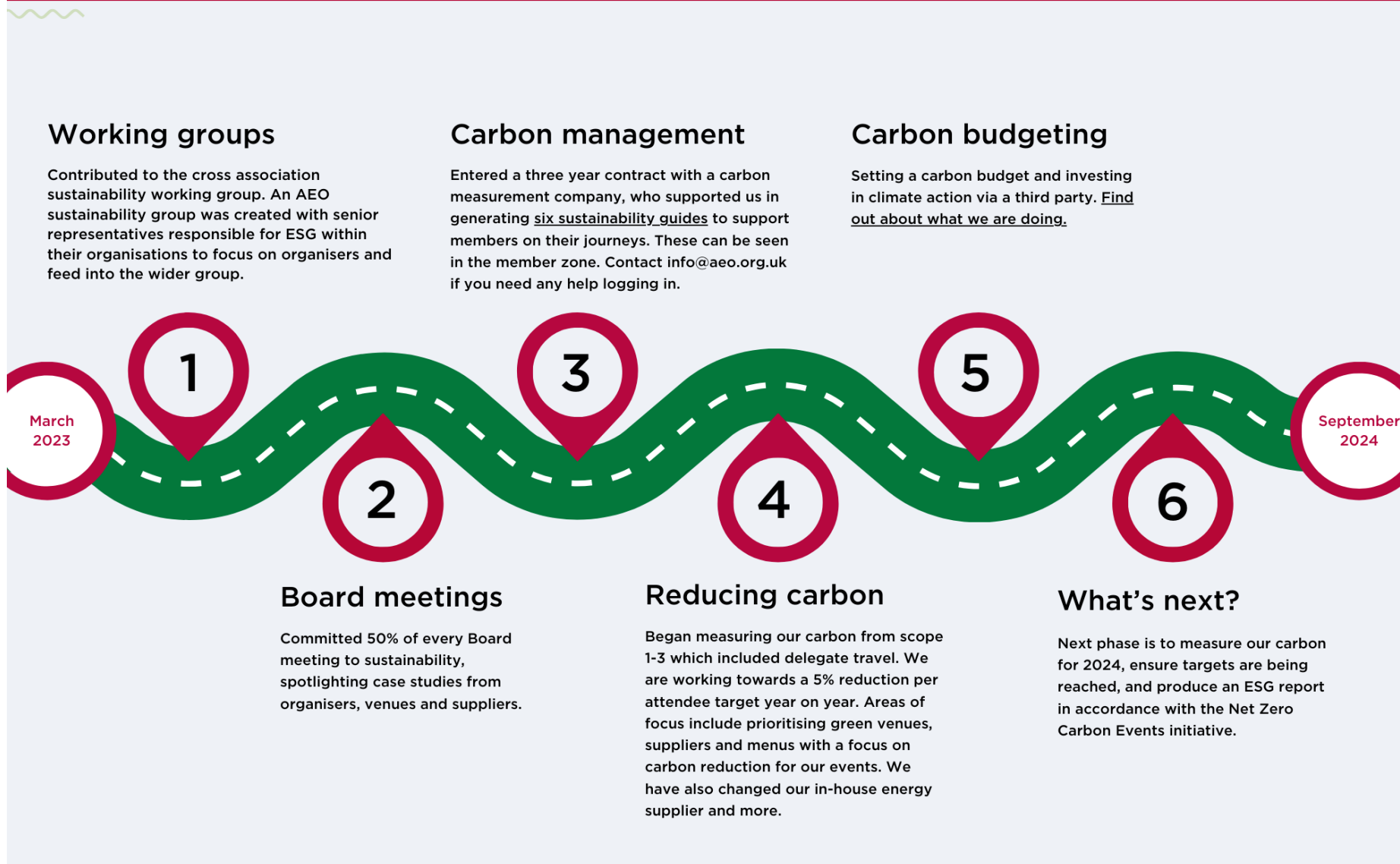
Informing our members

We created a range of guides to help our members become more sustainable:

- Examples of carbon action
- What carbon targets should you be setting
- How to lower the emissions from food
- What you need to know before measuring your carbon footprint
- Where to start tackling climate action
- Reducing attendee travel emissions
- Reducing event carpet emissions

Our journey so far

AEO created '18 months of sustainability', launched in March 2023, outlining how far AEO has come on its sustainability journey.



Working groups

Contributed to the cross association sustainability working group. An AEO sustainability group was created with senior representatives responsible for ESG within their organisations to focus on organisers and feed into the wider group.

Carbon management

Entered a three year contract with a carbon measurement company, who supported us in generating six sustainability guides to support members on their journeys. These can be seen in the member zone. Contact info@aeo.org.uk if you need any help logging in.

Carbon budgeting

Setting a carbon budget and investing in climate action via a third party. [Find out about what we are doing.](#)

1

2

3

4

5

6

March 2023

September 2024

Board meetings

Committed 50% of every Board meeting to sustainability, spotlighting case studies from organisers, venues and suppliers.

Reducing carbon

Began measuring our carbon from scope 1-3 which included delegate travel. We are working towards a 5% reduction per attendee target year on year. Areas of focus include prioritising green venues, suppliers and menus with a focus on carbon reduction for our events. We have also changed our in-house energy supplier and more.

What's next?

Next phase is to measure our carbon for 2024, ensure targets are being reached, and produce an ESG report in accordance with the Net Zero Carbon Events initiative.

Social strategy

AEO is dedicated to ensuring a 100% positive experience for all, celebrating the diversity of everyone involved in its events and initiatives. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Accessibility is a priority, with all event websites providing detailed information, alongside the provision of quiet spaces and prayer rooms. AEO remains open to feedback and committed to adjusting to meet attendees' needs.

We collaborate with initiatives that reflect AEO's commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion, such as Women in Exhibitions, where we are an active supporter, and our CEO is a mentor. We also offer mentoring to all - our Enterprise membership includes a mentorship from the AEO Board.

Code of conduct

Provides guidance of expectations to all event attendees and outlines what to do if something isn't right.

DEI initiatives

The DEI working group, event programme monitoring, and Board rotation are key initiatives we undertake to promote inclusivity.

Board rotation

Board places are available every year, so the Board reflects the changing needs of our members and fosters a culture of inclusivity of thought.

Confidential voting

Allowing members to share their feelings anonymously without interference from anyone else.

Accessibility

Provision of detailed venue information and videos for step free access. Adding subtitles to all our social outputs, live transcribing at events, provision of extensive alcohol-free options at events, and investing in a variety of locally sourced and sustainable food options to cater for all.

Governance strategy

The AEO works with its sister associations (AEV and ESSA) to ensure the interests of business events in the UK are effectively represented, understood and communicated to Government across the three pillars of growth, which are

- Becoming the world's meeting place
- Developing skills and people to unlock the industry's full potential
- Be one of the biggest engines for growth in the economy

We also invest in supporting our members' international activities, fostering relationships, extending our network and influence, helping their delivery and growth across the world.

Our industry fuels travel, tourism and hospitality. It also ignites business in the markets served by the events it creates, which has a knock-on effect on their supply chains across the UK and the world.

Engaging with industry groups

We actively engage with industry groups such as UKEVENTS to contribute to and support the broader events sector. This collaboration enables us to drive collective progress, share best practices, and advocate for the industry's sustainable growth and resilience.

Building connections with policymakers

We support our members in building connections with their local MPs by providing template letters. This resource empowers members to advocate effectively on key issues, strengthening relationships between the events industry and policymakers.

Keeping members informed

We provide briefing documents to keep members informed about the latest policy asks. This ensures members stay up-to-date and are well-equipped to engage with key industry and policy developments.

Advocacy partnerships

We hold bi-weekly meetings with our advocacy partner, who actively pursues engagements with ministers to represent the interests of our members and the broader events industry.

Gathering evidence for policy

We gather evidence and proof points, including case studies, from our members and industry stakeholders to strengthen and substantiate our policy asks, ensuring they are impactful and well-supported.

International

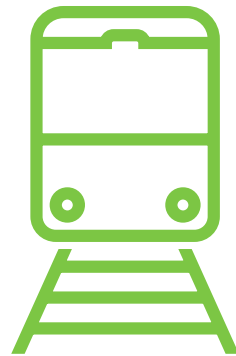
We actively participate in a number of international events to grow our connections, knowledge and influence to support our members as their activities increasingly take them all over the world.

2024 statistics

Each year, as a business, we will measure our carbon footprint and use the results to pinpoint strategies to help us reduce our footprint further.

As new methodologies, targets and regulation come online, we will learn and adapt our plan.

Find out more in the next section.



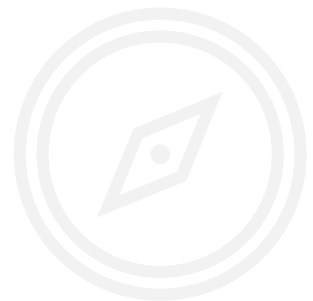
Reducing our carbon footprint 2024

The following actions are what we focussed our attention on to maximise our impact in 2024:

- › Influence attendees to take lower carbon travel options.
- › Work with suppliers and venues to make sustainable choices.
- › Embed sustainable thought processes through all purchasing and planning decisions.

Our aim is to reduce our average carbon footprint per attendee every year. This will allow us to continue to deliver great events whilst making our operations more carbon efficient.

Measuring and reducing carbon emissions is a significant challenge for the events industry and we are keen to continue tackling this problem head-on. If you have any questions about this, please reach out to us on info@aeo.org.uk



Carbon snapshot



Our total carbon footprint

2023	2024
152.7 tonnes	121.4 tonnes
-23%	



Average carbon footprint per attendee

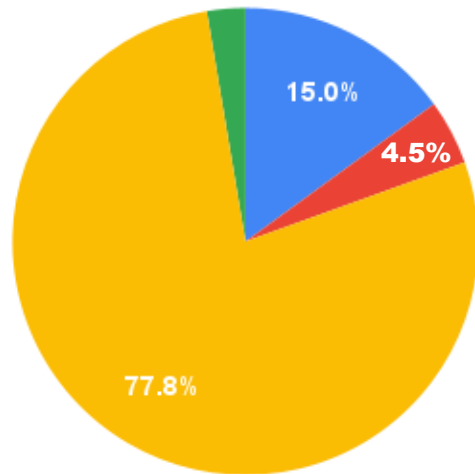
2023	2024
80 kg	69 kg
-13.8%	

The change in our score is primarily due to a reduction in emissions associated with travel to our events.

- In 2024, attendee travel emissions shrunk by 31.5 tonnes (-25.7%) compared to 2023, despite overall attendee numbers increasing by 11%.
- This is due to:
 - More attendees taking the train to our events instead of driving
 - Attendees travelling a shorter average distance to get to our events, particularly international visitors

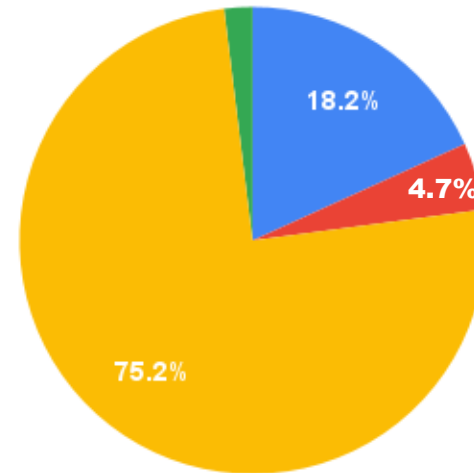
Total emissions

2023



- HQ
- Events
- Attendee Travel to Events
- Attendee Accommodation

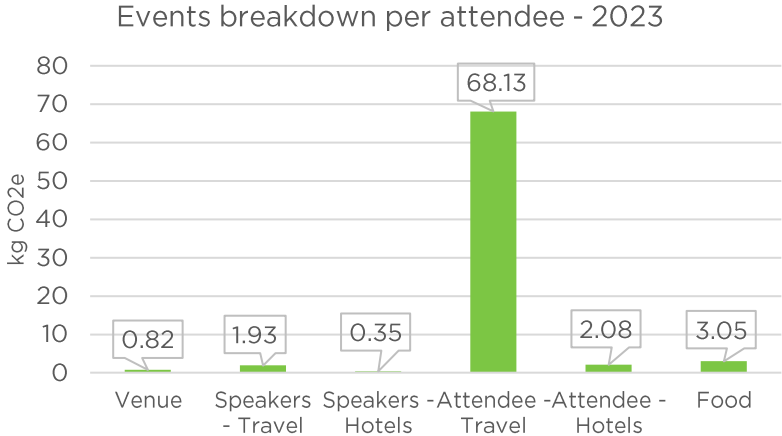
2024



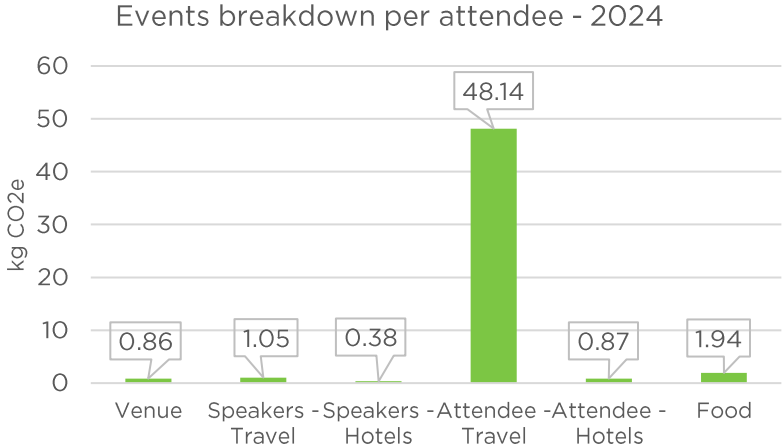
- HQ
- Events
- Attendee Travel to Events
- Attendee Accommodation

Event emissions

2023



2024



We ran an information campaign to help influence this change, which highlighted and encouraged sustainable transport options for attendees.

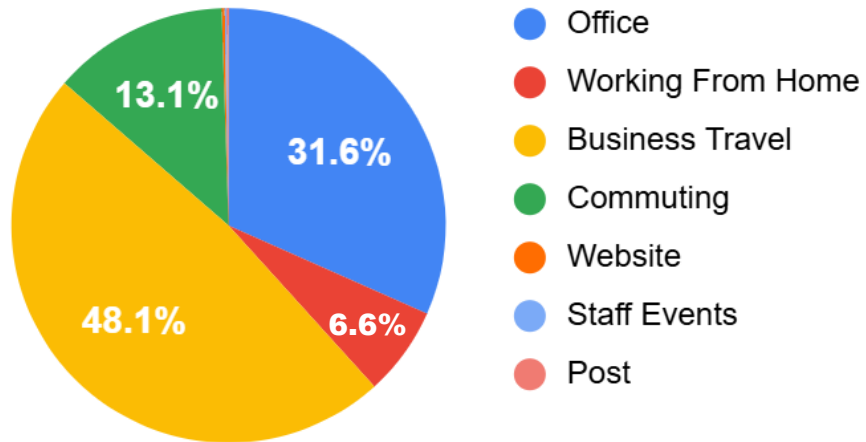
Attendee travel is by far the largest individual source of our emissions, accounting for **76.2%** of our overall footprint. As such, this decrease in attendee travel emissions has significantly contributed to our overall footprint reduction in 2024.

Whilst our strategy of highlighting low carbon transport options has been a success this year, we know that visitor travel emissions are something that will vary naturally, year after year. As such, it isn't clear whether these results are a direct result of our actions.

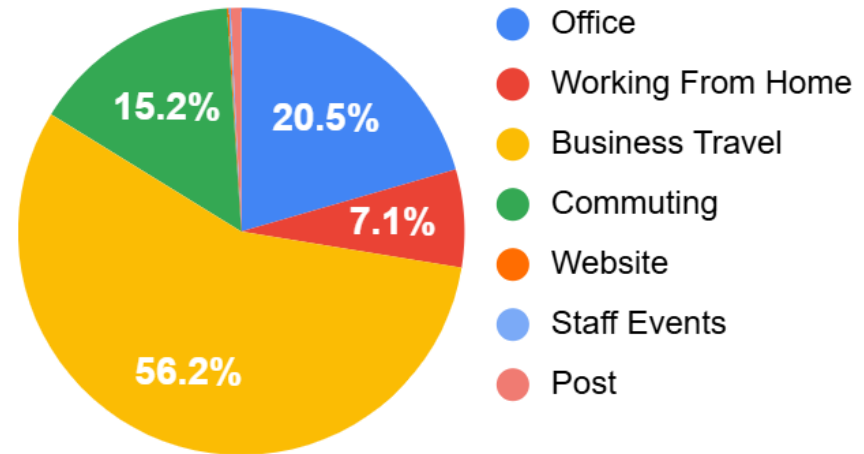
To minimise the risk of visitor emissions increasing in following years, we will continue to find new and more effective ways to decrease visitor travel emissions.

HQ emissions

2023



2024



Emissions summary

- Our office energy emissions have reduced, which may be due to our switch to a renewable energy source, reflecting our commitment to sustainable practice.
- An increased headcount and longer commuting distances have seen a rise in commuting emissions to 15.2%.
- Attending more events to engage with our members and enhance representation and support meant that business travel emissions rose to 56.2%.

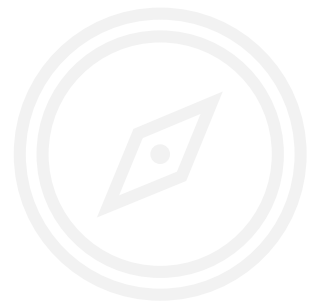
Reducing our carbon footprint 2025

In 2024, we prioritised actions with the greatest potential for impact. For 2025, we are building on these efforts to sustain and extend their effectiveness.

- › Influence attendees to take lower carbon travel options
- › Work with suppliers and venues to make sustainable choices
- › Invest in high-impact carbon projects while developing more robust internal practices to achieve long-term sustainability

Our aim is to reduce our average carbon footprint per attendee every year, whilst continuing to build engagement and value for members.

Measuring and reducing carbon emissions is a significant challenge for the events industry and we are keen to continue tackling this problem head-on. If you have any questions about this, please reach out to us on info@aeo.org.uk



Our sustainability focuses

Sustainability is central to our supplier selection and event practices, reflecting our commitment to reducing environmental impact and promoting responsible business.

By prioritising suppliers and venues that share our values, we ensure our operations align with our sustainability goals.



Business travel

- Prioritise lower carbon travel, via public transport when possible
- Prioritise hotels who are committed to net zero and run on renewable energy.
- Mandate economy class flights, dependant on business needs



Attendee travel

- Prioritise venues close to public transport
- Encourage international attendees to fly economy to our events
- Reduce the amount of hotel nights required by starting events in the afternoon, allowing time for delegates to arrive the day of the event.
- We track attendee travel to provide us with accurate data



Business operations

- Introduced energy saving measures to reduce electricity consumption
- Switched to renewable energy
- Increased percentage of waste recycled or composted.
- Created an internal 'green team' to discuss and implement sustainable activity within the association



Events

- Prioritise venues with proven sustainability credentials
- Reduce food waste and ensure all food waste is composted or sent to local charities.
- Locally sourced food and most sustainable menu choices
- Recycle lanyards
- Ask attendees to bring reusable water bottles
- Sustainable aluminium AV sets, which are reusable and 100% recyclable
- Graphics which can be recycled – avoiding date stamps so they can be reused

Supporting our team

We believe that a thriving team is the foundation of our success. By fostering a positive culture and embracing flexibility, we ensure our employees feel empowered, valued, and supported.

Whether it's through adaptable work arrangements, a commitment to work-life balance, or cultivating an inclusive and collaborative environment, we prioritise the well-being and growth of our people. Our approach not only enhances individual satisfaction but also drives innovation and collective achievement.

A positive culture

- We celebrate our members' success by hosting the AEO Excellence Awards and AEO People's Awards.
- It's important that we celebrate our own success, and as such entered and attended the Association Excellence Awards where we were shortlisted for 3 awards.
- Hold bi-annual social events to bond with our sister association teams to create synergy within EIA .
- Prioritise wellbeing - the AEO team successfully completed Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training.
- Safe travel is essential, we ensure the team travel to events in groups where possible and get home safely.

A flexible workplace

AEO offers a range of options to ensure a flexible approach to work. These range from:

- Compressed hours
- Part time hours
- Flexible & hybrid working
- Adopt an accountability driven approach as opposed to hours-driven



Discussing association success

We believe in transparent communication to build successful relationships.

The AEO team regularly meets to discuss issues and challenges in all areas, from events to development.

- Planning meetings, action plans and debriefs to share ideas and identify which parts of the event went well, and what needs improvements
- Team meetings to share what each department is working on and keep on the same page
- 121s to communicate with line managers about development and the next steps of changing business needs
- Monthly management meetings to discuss current business affairs and resolve challenges
- Ad-hoc function led meetings to collaborate and drive association growth



The road ahead

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The AEO is proud to share the progress we've made on ESG, including our carbon management goals and efforts to reduce our footprint.

We're committed to sustainability and reducing the environmental impact of our events and operations. Our aim is to lower the average carbon footprint per attendee each year, allowing us to run events more efficiently and more sustainably.

We're also committed to improving diversity, accessibility, and inclusivity in everything we do. At the same time, we support our team in creating a safe, productive, and enjoyable place to work.



Find out more about sustainability at AEO



www.aeo.org.uk/sustainability



Association of
Event Organisers



aeonews

AEO : ASSOCIATION
: OF EVENT
: ORGANISERS