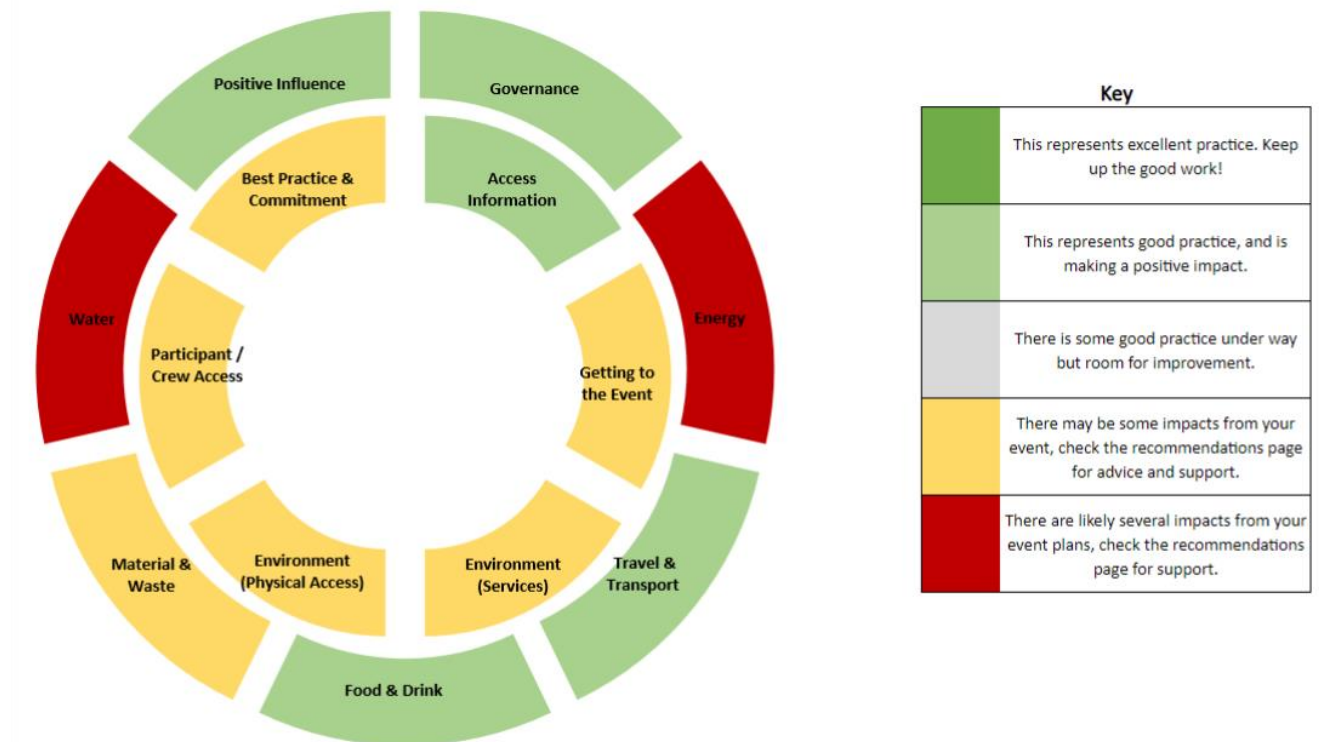


OAUK DATE Toolkit: Conference 2026 Case Study

Last year, for the first time, we used the DATE Toolkit to give us a picture of accessibility and sustainability at our national conference. This year, we're hoping to build on the experience and improve our offering. This Case Study serves as a chance for us to reflect on last years conference, understand how we might improve for our next conference, and what we can start considering, longer term, for future editions of the conference.

First off then, let's have a look at last year's DATE toolkit results.



We had 5 areas where we displayed good practice, 6 areas that we should consider reviewing and 2 areas where we'd been advised to make changes.

These areas in red came down to the following:

- We didn't have a set water conservation or monitoring plan in place for Conference 2025. Where we hire the venue for our conference, we're currently reliant on them having a system for monitoring water use and in Stoke, we weren't made aware of one.
- We didn't have an energy consumption measuring or reduction plan. Again, same as the above, we're reliant on the venue to share this information with us. We also weren't told what type of energy tariff the venue ran on in Stoke.

This year, to respond to these areas, we're starting our conversations with the venue earlier to understand what they already have in place from a sustainability perspective.

Now, let's have a look at our toolkit results for conference 2026.



Key	
	This represents excellent practice. Keep up the good work!
	This represents good practice, and is making a positive impact.
	There is some good practice under way but room for improvement.
	There may be some impacts from your event, check the recommendations page for advice and support.
	There are likely several impacts from your event plans, check the recommendations page for support.

The immediate differences to notice:

- We've got 1 area that we've upgraded from good practice to excellent practice
- We've got 1 area that we've upgraded from consider reviewing to excellent practice
- We've got 1 area that we've upgraded from consider reviewing to good practice
- We've upgraded 1 area from advisory to consider reviewing

What's stayed the same is:

- 4 areas remain in good practice
- 4 areas remain in consider reviewing
- 1 area remains an advisory

Improvements

Focussing on the inner ring:

- We've gone from 'maybe some impact' to 'excellent practice' on getting to the event by adding a dedicated place at the event to find out access information.
- We've also improved on our participant and crew access by undertaking consultation with our disabled audiences.

On the outer ring:

- We've improved on our water segment because, having visited the venue, we know where the reusable water points are,
- We've improved on travel and transport because of our commitment to work with local suppliers.

Areas to improve

We're down to one red area which means we're taking steps in the right direction. As outlined above, this is always going to be a tricky area for us. However, with better discussions with our venue, we can understand whether it is possible to measure energy usage during the conference. Once we've got this base line data, in future years, we can work on whether it will be possible to reduce energy consumption. This should hopefully put us on track to improving the one area of red on our toolkit.

Our 'consider reviewing' areas, those in yellow, that could be improved are as follows:

Inner Ring

Best Practice and Commitment – to improve on our best practice and commitment, our access plans need to be informed by lived experience.

Environmental (Physical Access) - to improve on Environmental (Physical Access) we'd have to provide level access through the 'backstage' areas of the conference. This is a tricky one because we intentionally keep all the level access parts of the conference for the delegates and often use any parts of the venue that are inaccessible for ourselves. We also need to work on a site crew access plan to improve on this area.

Environmental (Services) - to improve on Environmental (Services) we need to design our signage for an accessible audience and understand if the bars and traders at the conference have been briefed on accessible practice.

Outer Ring

Water – To improve on water, we'd need a water conservation/saving plan and a plan to record and report on our water use

Materials & Waste – to improve on our materials and waste we'd need a plan to reduce waste and increase recycling at our event and we'd need to understand if the venue separates food waste for composting.

Actions List:

Using the above, we can start to create a list of actions that we need to work on in the coming months to improve our DATE toolkit results before the conference. From the above, we know we can action:

- Having our access plans informed by lived experience
- Creating a Site Crew Access Plan
- Designing our signage for an accessible audience
- Working with the venue to understand if the bars and traders have been briefed on accessible practice
- Understand if the venue separates food waste for composting
- Understanding if the venue can track energy consumption at the conference
- Clarify what energy tariff the venue are on

Our longer-term actions, items from the above that we might not be able to introduce in the build-up to this conference are:

- Finding venues with level access throughout the ‘backstage’ areas
- Creating a water conservation/saving plan
- If we’re able to get accurate energy consumption information from the conference, we can use this to create a baseline for energy consumption and plan to reduce the impact in future
- How we can work with venues to improve their ability to recycle more and reduce waste

October 16th Update

Having completed the toolkit early in our planning process. We were able to contact Cambridge Council about our queries that are listed in the actions list above. These were:

- Working with the venue to understand if the bars and traders have been briefed on accessible practice
- Understand if the venue separates food waste for composting
- Understanding if the venue can track energy consumption at the conference
- Clarify what energy tariff the venue are on

On these items, Cambridge Council have said:

- All their staff are briefed on accessible practice
- They don’t separate food waste for composting
- They don’t, as of yet, have a way to track energy consumption but they are looking to implement, and it might be done in time for the conference
- They have clarified that Cambridge Council venues are run off entirely green renewable energy that, also, doesn’t include biomass.

This has allowed us to change answers to two of the questions in the toolkit, these are:

- Where applicable, will bars & traders be briefed on accessible practice? This goes from N/A to yes.
- What will be the main power source for your event? This goes from Mains – Standard Tariff to Mains Green Tariff

Let’s see what this does to our results...



Key	
	This represents excellent practice. Keep up the good work!
	This represents good practice, and is making a positive impact.
	There is some good practice under way but room for improvement.
	There may be some impacts from your event, check the recommendations page for advice and support.
	There are likely several impacts from your event plans, check the recommendations page for support.

As you can see, we've now, because of the information we've learned about energy supply, upgraded our 'Energy' segment from 'Advisory' to 'consider review'.

Because of this conversation, we can update our actions list too:

- Having our access plans informed by lived experience
- Creating a Site Crew Access Plan
- Designing our signage for an accessible audience
- Finding a way to separate food waste for composting at the event

We can now begin to work on these actions and see how they might update our toolkit results.

OAUK DATE Toolkit for Conference 2026 Answers in Full

Section 1 – Accessibility

Is access information available for your event?

Yes, via our event FAQs

Is there a point of contact for access enquiries?

Yes, that's General Manager David who can be contacted via email at David@outdoorartsuk.org

Are there provisions in place for disabled crew on site?

Not currently

Getting to the event

Do you have a dedicated place to get access information at the event?

Yes, our intention is to have an access steward with a station at this year's conference.

Will your event include an accessible campsite?

N/A

Have you considered how you communicate any onsite access challenges in advance?

Yes, via our Conference access FAQs

Environmental (Services)

Has signage been designed for an accessible audience?

We've not started working on our event signage so this is something we need to consider, for now, we're answering this no.

Will your event have accessible toilets?

Yes

Where applicable, will bars & traders be briefed on accessible practice?

We've put N/A for the time being as this is something we need to discuss further with the venue.

Environment (Physical Access)

Are there accessible areas (e.g. viewing platforms) as part of your events plan?

Yes, there will be accessible seating across the venues.

Is level access provided in production areas for staff, crew, and participants?

We've not yet decided which areas of the backstage will be 'production areas' but some of these areas aren't level access so for now we're answering this as no.

Do you have a site crew access plan?

Again, not yet, so we're answering this as no.

Participant/Crew Access

Is access planning incorporated into staff responsibilities

Yes absolutely.

Is accessible practice incorporated into your volunteer/staff/crew recruitments plans?

We've answered this as no but that's because we currently don't have recruitment plans, realistically, this should be N/A.

Have you undertaken any consultation/engagement with deaf and disabled audiences?

Yes, we have already and will continue to work with an access consultant.

Best Practice & Commitment

Will you be undertaking monitoring/or audience data collection?

Yes, we'll be measuring ticket sales and sending a variety of surveys after the event

Are your event access plans informed from a lived experience perspective?

No

Do you have plans for a long-term commitment to providing access to your event?

Yes

Now we've completed Page 1, let's have a look at our toolkit.



Key	
	This represents excellent practice. Keep up the good work!
	This represents good practice, and is making a positive impact.
	There is some good practice under way but room for improvement.
	There may be some impacts from your event, check the recommendations page for advice and support.
	There are likely several impacts from your event plans, check the recommendations page for support.

Let's compare this to last year



Key	
	This represents excellent practice. Keep up the good work!
	This represents good practice, and is making a positive impact.
	There is some good practice under way but room for improvement.
	There may be some impacts from your event, check the recommendations page for advice and support.
	There are likely several impacts from your event plans, check the recommendations page for support.

As you can see from the two inner rings that we have to compare, there's improvements across two areas. We've gone from 'maybe some impact' to 'excellent practice' on getting to the event by adding a dedicated place at the event to find out access information. We've also improved on our participant and crew access by undertaking consultation with our disabled audiences.

There are a few areas for us to consider in the run up to the conference that will improve the toolkit which are:

- How can we design accessible signage?
- How might we provide level access in our 'production areas'
 - This will then help us put provisions in place for disabled crew
- Writing a site crew access plan
- Working with audience with lived experience to further inform our access plans

And we need to clarify with the venue about how they are briefed on accessible practice at the bar and coffee areas.

Section 2 – Sustainability

Governance

Is there a person with responsibility for sustainability at this event?

Yes, from the staff team, its General Manager David Doust and we'll also have members of our board environmental sub-group attending.

Do you have a sustainability action plan (or similar) for the event?

Yes, we've got our green code of conduct for the event.

Will you measure and report emissions (ie carbon footprint) for this event?

No, we currently don't have any plans for this.

Energy

Do you have a plan to reduce energy consumption

No, not specifically.

What will be the main power of your event?

From the options available, I've gone for 'mains, standard tariff' but we'll clarify this with the venue

Do you have a plan to monitor and report on energy use?

No, not specifically

Travel & Transportation

Do you promote sustainable travel options to your audience?

Yes, we've got travel information on the conference FAQs that encourages sustainable travel or carbon offsetting where it isn't possible to travel sustainably

Are you taking steps to reduce supplier/delivery transport?

Yes, we've made a commitment to work with local suppliers only.

Do you capture audience travel data?

Yes, we'll be surveying in the ticket confirmation email.

Food & Drink

Do you have a sustainable food and drink policy?

Yes

Are you reducing high impact food such as meat and dairy at the event?

Yes

Do you prioritise sustainable food traders at your event?

We don't work with food traders as referenced in the question so we've answered this N/A.

Materials & Waste

Do you have a plan to reduce waste and increase recycling at your event?

No but can we?

Do you sell drinks in single use packaging/cups/bottles onsite?

No

Do you separate food waste for composting?

This is again something to clarify with the venue but for the time being, we've answered this as no.

Water

Do you have a water conservation/saving plan in place?

No currently we don't

Are water/refill points signposted on site?

Yes

Do you plan to record and/or report water use?

Again, currently no.

Positive Influence

Do you communicate about sustainable measures online?

Yes, that's what this is!

Does your event raise funds or support in any way sustainability organisations

No

Do you communicate your sustainability measures to crew, traders, and participants

For this conference, the crew, being the staff team at OAUK, all know about the sustainability measures. We've working directly with the venue around this too.

Now that we've finished section 2, let's see our final toolkit.



Key	
	This represents excellent practice. Keep up the good work!
	This represents good practice, and is making a positive impact.
	There is some good practice under way but room for improvement.
	There may be some impacts from your event, check the recommendations page for advice and support.
	There are likely several impacts from your event plans, check the recommendations page for support.

Let's compare this to last year



Key	
	This represents excellent practice. Keep up the good work!
	This represents good practice, and is making a positive impact.
	There is some good practice under way but room for improvement.
	There may be some impacts from your event, check the recommendations page for advice and support.
	There are likely several impacts from your event plans, check the recommendations page for support.