

Can Festivals be overall sustainable? (1702881)

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I will be looking into how much waste people create in festivals and comparing this to the waste people produce at home. I will then explore existing and hypothetical means of improving waste management in festivals.

In this report I will be looking into if festivals can be/are environmentally, sociably and economically sustainable particularly from a waste management point of view. I will be looking into the the large and small festivals such as Glastonbury, Reading, Leeds and Dorset Larmer tree festival. I will also be comparing these with how people recycle and manage waste in their own homes and to look at how behaviour changes when people are taking part in an outdoor event when there is a large crowd of people present. I will hopefully come to a conclusion of how and why people's behaviours change when attending a festival when it comes to disposing of waste, and also to conclusion if festivals could/ are heading towards a sustainable future.



<https://www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk>

Currently some festivals are hosted every year such as Creamfields, Reading and Leeds festivals to name a few. Glastonbury is a large festival that is hosted every 4 years to let the environment, area and ground to take a break due to the pollution it causes and damage to the ground. These festivals

generate a lot of waste for example 'Glastonbury, generated about 2,000 tonnes' of waste in 2014.' <https://www.wtskiphire.co.uk>. 135,000 people attended this event in 2014 so that means each person created 15 kilograms worth of waste over the space of 4 days. This is a massive amount of waste produced as the average person in England produces 4.6 kg over a four day period, if people produced as much waste as they did in festivals in their homes, over a course of a year it would amount to 2,737 kg of waste that's 2.7 tons of waste per person- <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk>. On the recycling side Glastonbury 'managed to recycle 54% of its waste in 2014 which is pretty average' according to <https://www.wtskiphire.co.uk>.



<https://www.thewasteplace.com>

Reading and Leeds are hosted for two days and in 2016 had an attendance of 90,000 people producing a volume of 616 tonnes' of waste in 2016. Although we can't compare these festivals to each other we can compare the waste produced by them to the waste produced at home. Attendees produced a total of 4.6 kg of waste each over the course of 2 days at the festival which is double the amount which is produced by an average person in 2 days which is 2.3 kg in an average household - <http://www.festivalrepublic.com>. so even in the smaller festivals people still produce double or more of the waste than they would normally produce at home. Reading and Leeds both recycled close to 82% of their waste in 2016 which is a vast improvement on previous years but could still be improved.

These findings show a massive difference between the disposal of rubbish at home compared to the disposal of waste at festivals, this leads to the question of to why people have a different attitude towards disposal of waste when attending festivals. I asked people who have previously been to a festival and noted their comments on 'why they think people don't practice good management of waste at festivals'. Here are the comments.

Ben Jones – “there’s not many bins placed around the area, people are way too drunk to be noticing them, can’t be bothered to walk around and find bins”.

Elesha Pederson - “they don’t care because they feel free to do what they want and aren’t thinking about waste when their favorite bands and DJ’s are playing”.

Rosemary June - “we live in a throwaway society and people don’t respect their surroundings, it’s easier to throw it on the floor than in a bin”.

Jac Evans - “the bins were really far away and weren’t placed in the best places”, “when people leave their tent’s they just find it easier to throw the rubbish on the floor and don’t even think of bins or the consequences that littering has on the environment.

Chris Daniel - “there aren’t many people putting their waste in the correct places so when people see that they just follow their example of throwing rubbish wherever they feel like it” “it wasn’t just food waste that was a problem either, people have so much disrespect for the place that they also urinate on the tents”.

These comments were very useful and provided me with a key insight as to why people behave in this way at festivals compared to the way they behave in their own homes. There was a common theme throughout these interviews and that was that there aren’t enough bins in easy access places. This could be fixed by placing more bins around the site in key areas.

After researching I came across a festival that claims to have recycled 100% of its waste, this festival is called the Dorset Larmer tree festival which is hosted for three days with an attendance of 5,000 people. Although this is an extremely small festival it’s definitely doing something right and is the ideal sustainable festival. ‘The Larmer Dorset festival works with local waste management Wiltshire Waste they recycle as many materials as they can, they also create enhanced recycling points around the festival to boost recycling rates’ -

<https://larmertreefestival.co.uk>.



<https://www.visit-dorset.com>

Upon further research I found out other ways that festivals make waste management easier for festival goers. These include handing out recycling bags for people to fill with as much waste as they have. Telling people about recycling initiatives and making sure people used the correct bin. They also have staff at a tent donation point that collect tents that the attendees don’t want to take home, these tents will then be re distributed to Charities or and homeless people. Some festivals also do maned post-festival salvage operations which go through the camp sites and collect left over tents, rubbish and belongings that are in good condition and also donate these to charities such as British Heart Foundation and Oxfam.



<https://www.thegryphon.co.uk>

Organizers of festivals such as Creamfields create lists of what to take to the festivals, maybe they could include a section of how to reduce the waste you create in a festival that people will read before attending and would use the advice when packing. They could give advice such as “bring one big bottle of water and a reusable cup instead of bringing many small bottles of water”.

I believe if people don’t pack as many things to take to a festival, they would create less rubbish. In addition to having rules on how much alcohol festival goers can bring to the event I believe there should be a similar system for how much food and water people bring in. This would significantly reduce the amount of waste created per person.

After more research I found that people take more food than they need to a festival but at home they have food stored in a fridge, so they only buy and use what they need - <https://www.trespass.com>.

The UK government have issued directives to households that they can only use 2 black bags every fortnight and also have produced different colored bags and circulated these to households in order to encourage and increase recycling in order to decrease the amount of waste that goes into landfill - <https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk>. This was a successful initiative to reduce waste and could possibly be implemented by festival organisers by providing a certain amount of bags to everyone in a pack at the entrance of the site. This would make it easier for the post festival cleaners to manage waste as they could have different teams picking up different colored bags for plastic paper cans and food waste.

As well as insuring that festivals are environmentally sustainable it's important that they are also considered to be economically and socially sustainable. The cost of cleaning 2,000 tonnes of waste is estimated at about £780,000 for Glastonbury - <https://www.wtskiphire.co.uk>. This is a massive amount of money just for cleaning up waste, I believe this could be reduced significantly if there were a better waste management system in place which used all of the methods talked about above.

Currently festivals report that 25% of its waste are comprised of left-over tents and these are sometimes sent to landfill. It is also reported that 1 in 6 people leave their tent at a festival - <https://www.agreenerfestival.com>. These statistics are staggering considering that these festivals happen every year, something needs to be done to decrease the amount of waste people leave at these events.



<https://www.somersetlive.co.uk>

There are many things organizers do to make the events socially sustainable such as stop playing the music at specific times such as 11-12 o'clock so that the residents around them don't feel the need to complain about the noise. They also organize silent discos in the night so there is no noise to be heard in the night and also pick a day where music will be played through till 3 am and alert the area around them so that the residents are aware of the events. The festival organizers also pick rural areas with many fields around them so that they can center the stages in a way so that the area around them have minimal sound and light pollution - <https://www.creamfields.com>.

Festivals increasingly use more pyrotechnics each year and the most common of these are fireworks. These are used increasingly every year to make the shows better and bigger every year. The fireworks create both light and sound pollution, another alternative to fireworks could be silly string or using glowsticks that create the same sort of atmosphere but less impact on the pollution side. There are also recycled fireworks that can be crafted by the festival and used instead of using virgin materials/new fireworks - <https://www.sweettyhigh.com>



<https://washingtondeca.org>

In conclusion I believe that although festivals create more waste per head than is created on average than that of person at home in the same amount of time. However, the situation is improving, and recycling rates are increasing in festivals as well as in households. Festivals are getting more creative every year with schemes to help them reduce waste and create a more sustainable future for the festival organisation. I think that the government will also play a part in encouraging and legislating festivals to be more efficient with their waste management. As new legislations will be brought in to combat the problem of plastic waste and on the increasing cost of landfill, we will see that people need to take responsibility of waste management and the effect it has on the environment more seriously.

After looking at both household waste created by one-person versus waste created by one person at a festival, I discovered there is a large discrepancy that needs to be resolved as currently the difference in the waste on average between the festivals and the households is 5.5 kg - 2.2 kg = 3.3 kg or 60%.

By looking at the evidence of how much the festivals manage to recycle I think this gap will improve until it's closed. Furthermore, a trend that seems to be becoming more popular is that of sustainability and making things eco-friendly and festivals are no exception to this. There is an obvious correlation between how much waste is produced by people and the environment they are in. It seems to me that people care less about disposing of their rubbish when around people who have the same attitude. Festivals are also thought as a place for fun and drinking and these also play a factor in how much individuals care about how they dispose of their waste correctly. In the interviews I conducted I found out what the type of intentions and thoughts are of the festival goers have in this type of environment can be summed up in two words "care free" not worrying about anything especially not on how to dispose of their waste.

I believe festivals can be 100% sustainable without losing any of their fun and crazy atmospheres, there are a lot of schemes out there that are slowly being put into place in order to maintain the clean sustainable future of festivals.

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