

# Sustainability Champions



Westonbirt, the National Arboretum



Sustainability in action



Protecting the environment

## Westonbirt, the National Arboretum

Sophie Nash, Programme Manager

**As a large visitor attraction, with over half a million visitors a year, Westonbirt, the National Arboretum is striving to reach net zero. Forestry England Programme Manager, Sophie Nash, explains their strategic approach to reducing emissions and protecting the environment.**

### **You've focused a lot of effort on your energy use, why?**

"We carried out an audit and baseline to look at options to reduce consumption and look at renewable generation. Can you believe that in 2022, when we did our audit, we used 158k of electricity – that's equivalent to 8 houses!

"Since we established our baseline we have moved to a renewable energy tariff, installed more LED lights in our offices, changed timers and temperatures for our boilers and have just installed our first solar panels. We have also worked on draft exclusions in our buildings – did you know that a 1cm gap in a doorway is the equivalent of a missing brick in your wall?

"We are also virtualising our servers, moving from a physical one to cloud-based, to be more energy efficient, and doing a digital tidy-up in the process."

### **With such large visitor numbers, how have you approached waste management on site?**

"We have a waste strategy to reduce general waste and increase recycling following an audit and baseline study. We have various targets for waste including increasing our recycling rate – our target was 70%, set by the government, but we exceeded that target last year. We are about to install new recycling bins across the whole site, for public areas and behind-the-scenes, to increase our recycling further.

"We provide water refill points in various locations across the site and use hand dryers, where possible, instead of paper towels. We make sure coffee grounds are collected as food waste, not general, and make them available for visitors to take home for free.

"Our restaurant catering partners are using local food suppliers where possible, introducing more reusable packaging including pizza tins, there's a 30p off hot drinks reward when you bring a reusable cup, and we're removing condiment sachets and replacing them with larger containers to reduce plastic waste."

### **Tell us how you're encouraging sustainable travel**

"We are currently working with partners to promote public transport provision in Gloucestershire to nature attractions, which has resulted in adding our site and others to the Robin Bus routes and carrying out a feasibility study on our public transport provision. We are also currently working with the University of Gloucestershire students to carry out travel surveys and analysis of our visitors, staff and volunteer travel."

### **How are your staff involved in your sustainability work?**

"Since 2018 we have a staff green team with representatives from various departments, and occasionally from the franchises on site. The green team make suggestions for issues/things to improve and look at solutions. They created our first win, which was the addition of food waste collections, removing food waste from general waste collections.



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Sophie Nash



Green initiatives



Making an impact



Recycling single use cups



Electric charging

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continued

"Creating advocates in the wider team is important to ensure that sustainability is viewed as not an individual's responsibility but something we all impact. Jane Goodall's quote sums this up nicely, 'You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.'"

"Creating a wider group also helps ensure

sustainability is considered more in day-to-day decisions, it's not been a quick change, but we are starting to see the positive impact and awareness in the wider team. The ambition is that everyone on site is a sustainability champion"

**What quick wins would you suggest to other businesses?**

"Look at easy things that you would do

at home; change to a renewable energy tariff, change lights to LED, change boiler temperatures and timings, look at waste. General waste is expensive, food waste is easy to introduce, as is cardboard recycling which is worth more than mixed recycling."

[forestryengland.uk/westonbirt-the-national-arboretum](https://forestryengland.uk/westonbirt-the-national-arboretum)

***"Don't be afraid to share what you are doing. No one has mastered being sustainable in every aspect of businesses or in our home life or we would have all reached net zero! Don't let perfection or fear of people pointing out things you haven't resolved yet to not start or share your successes."***