

THE  
SOMETHING  
GREEN

Sustainable  
Wedding Guide

By

 NORTH  
LONDON  
WASTE  
AUTHORITY

# Welcome to the Something Green Sustainable Wedding Guide!

**This wedding guide is brought to you by North London Waste Authority (NLWA). We are committed to helping residents reduce their waste and increase recycling, through our projects and lifestyle campaigns.**

If you're planning a sustainable wedding, congratulations - you've joined a growing trend of people keen to make sustainable choices when it comes to creating the big day. New research for NLWA shows that 2 in 5 people planning their nuptials in the next five years say making their wedding as green as possible is a key priority. We know there is lots to think about which is why we've designed this guide to help inspire you, with tips and advice on how to make your wedding day special, stylish and a little more planet friendly. Because the best taste is less waste.

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# 2 in 5

planning nuptials in next five years say making their wedding as **green as possible** is a key priority



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# The plan

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## Getting help with planning

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Weddings can be complicated to organise, from finding specialist suppliers to working out who's going to tidy up at the end of the day. If you have a super organised friend or family member who can help you with this then get them on board, perhaps they could offer their time in lieu of a present. Or if you can, consider using a wedding planner, they could save you time, money and stress! There are lots of experts out there

offering planning solutions to suit your style and budget, and yes there are even specialist sustainable wedding planners too. So, whether you're looking for some initial ideas to get you started or someone to make sure things run smoothly on the day, have a think if there is someone out there who can help make your dream wedding day a reality.

## Choosing a venue and location

Making the decision on where to hold your celebrations is a key step in reducing the environmental impact of your wedding day. Choosing a more central venue for guests to travel to or, if possible, selecting one venue for the ceremony and reception will reduce travel impacts. While opting for a venue that has inbuilt charm will help cut down on the need for decorations - be it a beautiful barn or a botanical garden. Also, many businesses are keen to show off their green credentials so ask your venue or hotel about their sustainability policies and how they can help you make your day as waste free as possible.

## Guestlist

Being selective with your guestlist may determine the size of your wedding and where it can be held. We know you'll want to share your day with important family and friends, so whether it's a small celebration or a big bash you can make your day as environmentally friendly as you want from the moment you send out your invitations. By promoting sustainable transport options, encouraging the re-wearing of outfits that have already been to a wedding or two, or inviting people to take home leftovers from the big day, your guests can be part of making the occasion as sustainable as you want. Who knows, you may even inspire some other couples to green their wedding plans too.

## Transport options

If you've not managed to find an all-in-one venue, think about fun, quirky and sustainable ways to transport both you and your guests. Encourage guests to travel by public transport or carpool on the day if possible. For you and your partner - consider travelling from the ceremony to reception by low carbon options like horse and carriage, electric black cab or even scooters! Hiring a bus so that your guests all travel together is not only a good way to keep extra cars off the road but also gets the party started! And if it's walkable - how about designing some personalised maps to ensure everyone arrives safely?



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**My number one tip for a green wedding is to be organised! During the planning process, take your time to find a venue which is suitable for an environmentally friendly wedding and do your research on potential suppliers' eco credentials. For the big day itself, make sure there's a plan for the end of the night to prevent waste. You don't want your carefully thought-out reusable decor or flowers you were planning to give out the next day getting thrown away after all that careful planning!**



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# The style

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## Sustainable bridal gowns

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Clothing is one of the top single-use items at weddings, and that's particularly the case with the wedding dress. However, you don't have to compromise looking and feeling good on your special day by choosing a more sustainable outfit – there are lots of stylish options for wedding gowns that have a much lower impact on the environment. Research designers who use sustainable certified fabrics in their bespoke pieces. You could also work with a designer to repurpose an heirloom piece. Or why not find a vintage or second-hand dress that can be adapted to suit your style? By choosing to work with a professional seamstress or tailor for your outfit, you will ensure it fits you perfectly, whilst using preloved fabric rather than new.

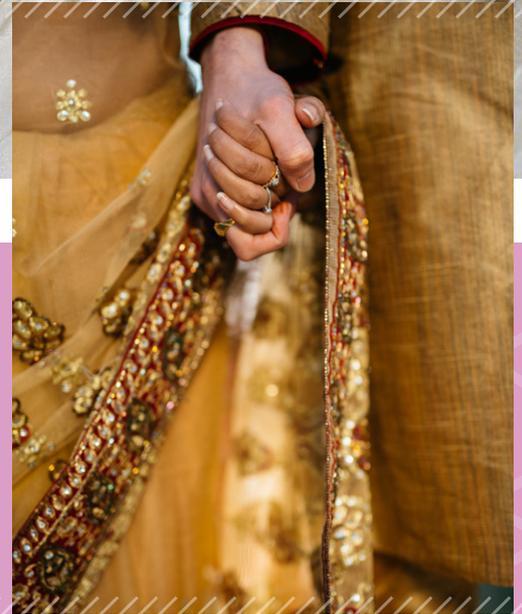
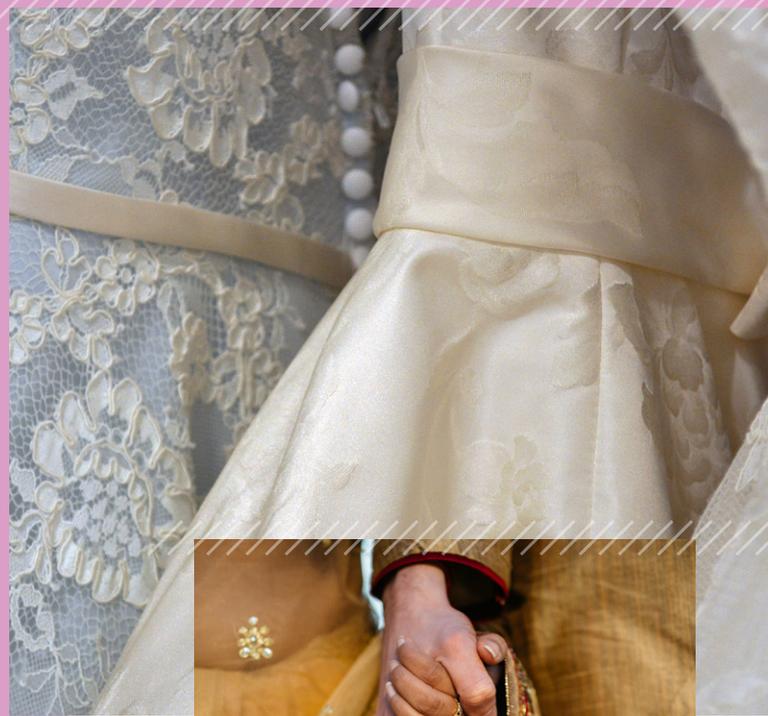
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## Rentals

Renting your outfits for the day is a great option to reduce the impact of your outfit choice. It's a much more affordable way of wearing a designer name too, if that's your thing. It's also worth thinking about renting outfits for the rest of your wedding party so you can be confident that reuse is the fashion trend for the day.

## Accessories

Whether it be a hat for the groom, a veil for the bride or a fascinator for the fashionista, there are lots of added extras to finish off an outfit that we often overlook as options to reuse. Finding treasures in charity shops or sourcing costume jewellery to embellish your look can be a fun way of adding that extra bit of sparkle. Maybe you have an old piece of clothing made of fantastic fabric that could be upcycled for pocket squares or bow ties, that can also add a unique and personal accent to your look? And why not ask family and friends for something borrowed? Incorporating family treasures is great way to make your outfit feel extra special.



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**When choosing your wedding dress, take a thoughtful approach. This could be by wearing or reworking a preloved dress, or by finding a company or designer that uses sustainably certified fabrics and a socially responsible manufacturing process.**

The Sustainable Bride



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# The feast

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**Try to source local and sustainable produce wherever possible. Be careful not to over eat, you don't want too much food waste or guests too full to dance the night away!**

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Jacinta O'Riordan, Forage & Feast

## The wedding meal

Did you know a tenth of all wedding food - equivalent to a food waste bill of almost £500 for an average celebration – is thrown in the bin? To avoid adding to this mountain of wasted food, work with a caterer who has a sustainability and waste policy. Consider bringing some Tupperware or environmentally friendly packaging to the venue in advance of the day so that you can pack guests off home with a selection of leftovers. They'll be very grateful for it the next day when they don't have to cook!

Ask your caterer if they source ingredients locally or work with them to design a menu that uses your favourite foods from the local area. This will help to reduce food miles and support the local community.

When it comes to the cake, consider choosing a vegan option to cater for all – most good bakers now offer all sorts of alternatives. If you plan to use fruit for decoration, keep it seasonal for the perfect flourish.

Finally, ask yourself if you really need that full on evening buffet after a three-course meal and cake – it might be traditional, but it doesn't mean it has to be done that way! Speak to your caterer about providing a selection of food that could be easily packed up for the next day if it's not eaten.

## Reducing single-use waste and packaging

Don't be afraid to ask your caterer about their packaging and how they intend on serving your feast – avoid single-use by hiring in glasses, cutlery, crockery, linen napkins and serving dishes if needed.



# One in five

couples felt guilty about the **amount of single-use plastic** involved

## Drinks

When it comes to a celebration it's worth considering English sparkling wine to keep your carbon footprint a little smaller. There are also some delicious alternatives for cordials and mocktails using juice from surplus fruit, so everyone can enjoy something special and sustainable to toast the happy couple.



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# The décor

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## Flowers

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When choosing your florist ask them where they source their flowers from. 90% of cut flowers in the UK come from overseas but you can drastically reduce the environmental impact of your wedding day by buying British seasonal flowers. Seasonality is key too. If peonies are a deal breaker for your wedding day, then you'll want to get married in June – as UK peonies only

have a short season. Be sure to ask for no flower foam or plastic in your displays and check if your florist hires out vases so you don't have to buy new. Want an alternative to the real deal? Check out sustainable paper florists for lasting bouquets or dried flower decorations for the ceremony.

## Wedding favours and table decorations

By avoiding single-use or throwaway wedding favours and table decorations you can create a tasteful and more thoughtful look for your guests to enjoy. If you are into crafting, why not make something lasting for your guests that they'll want to take away and keep as a memento? Place holders are great – people are more likely to take home something personalised to them rather than the happy couple! Also consider mini potted plants or succulents that double up as table decorations that can be taken home by your guests later. Personalised pots of mini homemade jams, handmade soaps or packets of wildflower seeds are also lovely touches.



## Décor

Choosing more sustainable wedding décor doesn't mean compromising on your aesthetic. Just a few tweaks can make all the difference. Tablecloths and napkins made from materials like hessian, hemp or pure linen can be naturally dyed to suit your theme. Bringing in pieces from home like vases, mirrors or fairy lights is also a wonderful way to reduce costs. When it comes to tables, chairs, tableware, and furnishings, consider hiring from prop stores. You can hire anything from garden games to candelabras. Also keep an eye on freecycle or Facebook groups to pick up any extra bits you might need.

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# The extras



## Wedding stationery

Do your wedding invites need to be on paper and sent via post, or could you use electronic ones instead? You can even link these to a simple personalised wedding website with all the details your guests might need. And if you need menus or place settings on the day, there are lots of sustainable stationery designers and printers out there. Don't forget plantable seed paper too. Got a friend with good handwriting? Easels and chalkboards are easily hired to avoid big one-off print jobs for seating charts or orders of service.

## Confetti

Natural confetti and dried flower petals are all the rage, in fact some venues will insist on biodegradable confetti only. You could also add in herbs for a fragrant touch. Do check what your venue allows.



## **Make-up and hair**

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Many brides will choose a make-up artist and hair stylist for the day – however this could be something a friend could help with, using your existing lotions and potions. Natural hair products and seasonal flowers for flower crowns make a fantastic sustainable option for hair accessories.

## **Photographer and videographer**

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Choosing someone local to your venue can cut down on travel costs. Most videographers and photographers offer completely digital packages too so there's no need for them to print and post prints out to you. If they do need to post anything, then ask that it be sent in recyclable packaging.

## **Music and entertainment**

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Whether it be a roaming acoustic band to get the guests up on the dance floor, a string quartet to serenade you down the aisle or jazz band for pre-dinner drinks, consider how far they need to travel to your venue – the more you can reduce the distance, the better for the environment.

## **Ethical jewellery and rings**

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Resetting a family heirloom into a wedding band or searching for Fairtrade gold or recycled

platinum wedding bands is both meaningful and better for the planet. Research jewellery makers and crafters who use upcycled materials too, like sea glass. Keep an eye out at your local charity shop too, you never know what might turn up that you could repurpose.

## **Gift lists**

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Most people ask for contributions to the honeymoon fund these days – but if home furnishings are more your thing, then look for local makers or social impact websites that offer homewares or eco-friendly or upcycled products. Saving up for solar panels? You could always ask for contributions towards that! Alternatively, you may want to ask your guests to donate to a charity of your choice in place of a gift.

## **Recycle and reuse**

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When it comes to the end of the day, having a plan to re-use, repurpose or recycle is key. Decor or clothing that you won't use again could be someone else's treasure so avoid binning it and pop it on your local Facebook community group, Freecycle, or selling platforms.

## **The local links**

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Here are links to some useful resources to use as part of your wedding planning research. Choosing more planet friendly alternatives is a fantastic way to reduce your environmental impact. Feel good about your special day, by making just a few adjustments and choosing something green.

### **Supplier directory**

### **How to budget for your wedding**

### **Tips for planning a UK based hen/stag do**



# The checklist!



## To do: Done

- Guest list
- Choose venue & book accommodation
- Get planning help lined up
- Decide on theme/colours/style
- Set up wedding website
- Send out e-invitations
- Choose caterer
- Plan outfits
- Book florist
- Book travel for couple/guests
- Try wedding food/menu
- Hire wedding party outfits
- Book make-up artist and hair stylist
- Decide on drinks
- Hire props/decorations/tables/chairs
- Decide on wedding favours & table decorations
- Final outfit fittings
- Choose rings
- Organise seating chart
- GET MARRIED!**

## Thank you



We wish you well in your wedding planning and hope this guide will help you create a memorable and meaningful day that's just a little more planet friendly.

For more tips and ideas on how to reduce everyday waste, follow [@connectNLWA](#) on Instagram and Facebook or check out our website for inspiration from our projects and campaigns.

