

WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST



Engaging Festival Organisers, Volunteers and Attendees in Better Waste Management Practice at Festivals

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Thank you to The Lightning Team at *Lightning in a Bottle* for giving me the opportunity to get so involved in the event waste management process, start to finish.

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Glossary and Abbreviations

WCMT - Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

LIB - Lightning in a Bottle, a festival near Bradley, California. 2016 attendance 25,000 approx. The first event attended as a part of WCMT Fellowship.

Bonnaroo - Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival, near Manchester, Tennessee. 2016 attendance 45,000 approx. The second event attended as a part of WCMT Fellowship.

Firefly - Firefly Music Festival, in Dover, Delaware. 2016 attendance 80,000 approx. The third event attended as a part of WCMT Fellowship.

Pre-show / Post-show - The time before / after an event

NGO – Non Government Organisation

F.W.R.D. – Festival Waste Reclamation and Distribution¹. A charity created to reduce festival landfill waste and to help those who are without.

Incinerator – Landfill waste is incinerated to create ‘free’ energy, also creating toxic nanoparticles².

1 - F.W.R.D. Festival Waste Reclamation and Distribution

About the Author

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." -Helen Keller

Having worked at festivals for a number of years and in a variety of roles, such as traffic marshall, security guard, fire safety and salvage coordinator, the role that the author kept finding himself in was that of Waste and Recycling Management, or litter picker.

After years of throwing away abandoned, but perfectly useable, camping gear he went on to found the charity Festival Waste Reclamation and Distribution with two other knowledgeable, experienced festival workers, in order to create and maintain clear channels and processes through which abandoned festival items are diverted from landfill and given to those who are without, such as the homeless population and refugees.

While his experience is varied, the author felt that searching out like-minded and similarly intentioned people could only improve the quality of the work done through shared ideas, observations and best practice. So if, at any point whilst reading this report, you feel inclined to share an observation that you've made, or an idea pops into mind then please do not hesitate to do just that.

2 - <http://www.no-burn.org/why-incineration-is-a-very-bad-idea-in-the-twenty-first-century/> - http://www.bsem.org.uk/uploads/IncineratorReport_v3.pdf

Introduction to the Project

“We are stripped bare by the curse of plenty.” - Winston Churchill in 1932, referring to a theory on over-production.

Definition of the word ‘festival’³

noun

1. A day or period set aside for celebration or feasting, esp one of religious significance;
2. Any occasion for celebration, esp one which commemorates an anniversary or other significant event;
3. An organized series of special events and performances, usually in one place;
4. *Archaic* - a time of revelry; merrymaking.

Festivals of old used to have a purpose. People used to come together to indulge and celebrate a religious occurrence or significant event. Celebrating an event or anniversary of importance brings with it the respect held for the initial event and original purpose. If the reason for the gathering is removed we are then using the word archaically, back to a time of revelry and merrymaking for the sake of merrymaking and revelry. The *raison d’etre* of modern day music festivals is predominately for financial gain and therein lies the difference. Creating a celebratory event in order to remember an event or occurrence from the past can come with it a greater honesty of intention than doing it for personal profit or gain.

Going to a festival might be seen as a step backwards, or at the very least not a step forward in any way, during a time when everything is developing so quickly and innovation is being seen on so many fronts. Since festivals, as we know them today, began we have seen great advancement in almost every aspect of society and so it leaves the question, ‘Why are people more enthusiastic than ever about gathering in a field, living in substandard conditions and listening to music?’

At festivals in the UK we have reached, what the author personally hopes, the bottom of the barrel. It is now a common occurrence for a quarter of all tents taken to an event to be left behind, some damaged and some in perfect condition. It is now too common an occurrence for some attendees to use their own or a neighbour’s tent for the purpose of a toilet. It is now a common occurrence for a campsite to look like the beginnings of a post-apocalyptic landfill. It is common practice for the majority of that stuff to then actually be sent to landfill.

The following report seeks to acknowledge some of the pitfalls of festivals, their structure and the culture that has been created⁴. Outlined is a careful analysis, through experience and observation, followed by a series of recommendations that should be implementable without great cost or effort. The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship enabled the

3 - <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/festival>

4 - <http://www.juliesbicycle.com/latest/news/7419-new-project-to-tackle-campsite-waste-at-reading-festival>

author to visit three music festivals in the U.S.A. Each festival had been carefully researched for their different qualities in order to explore different elements of festivals that, the author feels, are in dire need of change and improvement in our country. Each event carried with it a slightly different purpose for going, which, to give the reader a frame of reference, I have outlined below.

Lightning in a Bottle⁵ - Multiple time winner of the Outstanding Award by *A Greener Festival*, making it the greenest festival in the U.S.⁶ . This festival is likely to attract more conscious attendees as a result of this. At this event the author was given the opportunity to work with the waste management and recycling teams both during the festival and afterwards for the clean-up. This year's attendance was approximately 25,000 people.

Bonnaroo⁷ - A world-renowned festival with an awareness of environmental needs that owns the land it is held on, hopefully leading to a variety of changes. The festival has a mixed demographic and a large capacity, bringing with it a new set of challenges. At this event the author was given the opportunity to observe volunteer management procedure, attendee-focussed waste reduction initiatives and be involved with the post-show clean up. This year's attendance was approximately 45,000, a lot lower than had been anticipated by the organisers.

Firefly Music Festival⁸ - A newer commercial festival with a large capacity, big line up and a self-proclaimed sustainable edge. This festival is closest in comparison to the commercial music festivals in the UK. This event was attended in order to observe similarities and differences to equivalent festivals in the UK. Also, to work post-show with a local organisation that collects abandoned camping supplies and uses the salvaged items to provide support for local homeless population. This year's attendance was approximately 80,000.

The main interest and focus has been to explore how festivals goers can be engaged in the festival process to participate and increase the overall value of the experience for both attendees and production company. Questions were written and selected in order to approach the problems in a holistic way rather than simply asking 'How can festivals become sustainable?' because that is a big question for someone to tackle and the answer to that question is that festivals should probably not be held in the first place due to their damaging effects on the land and the amount of waste generated, which is not helpful to the research.

5 - <http://lightninginabottle.org/>

6 - <http://www.agreenerfestival.com/>

7 - <https://www.bonnaroo.com/>

8 - <https://fireflyfestival.com/>

Method and approach

“What is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?” Winston Churchill 1908

The following questions were asked of a number of people during the Fellowship trip whose experience, opinion and outlook were respected and were felt valuable to the overall purpose of the research. The responses also formed a base for my observations at each event.

- Why do people go to festivals and how does this differ, if at all, to what actually comes to pass at festivals?
- What are the three main factors that lead to festival campsites being left the way that they are?
- What changes could be made by festival production companies to foster a more positive and caring attitude to the festival and land and reduce the quantity of items left behind?
- What motivations and incentives might help to reduce the amount of campsite litter and encourage the right-minded people to come back next year?
- What is the easiest way to explain and encourage recycling at festivals and how can awareness of environmental issues that occur at festivals be positively raised?
- Are there environmental improvements already being practiced at other festivals that may work elsewhere?
- How is it possible to improve the volunteer experience and any associated loyalty or work improvements that result from this?

At two of the three festivals attended the author worked as a part of the volunteer programme in order to get hands on experience and a better understanding of any best practice that was present.

Taking into consideration the variety of events and topics being covered, this report has been divided into different themes in order to assist the reader to be able to draw comparisons between events and to be able to better identify benefits that may be applicable to festivals in the UK. Those themes are as follows:

1. Waste(d) Potential
2. Expectation vs. Reality
3. For The Love Of Volunteers

Major Findings in brief

The Fellowship provided many learning opportunities, with each event attended providing lessons and potential solutions to the issues being faced at our own events in the UK. Below is a brief overview of findings.

- That volunteers work better when they have their needs met, are clear on their role and are appreciated for the work that they do.
- That steps can be taken to encourage attendee participation in taking care of the festival environment.
- That salvage operations can greatly reduce the amount of landfill waste at festivals.
- That plastic can be avoided at festivals.

Recommendations in brief

After experiencing different ways in which production companies, litter contractors and NGOs are facing key issues at festivals, here is a list of recommendations that the author believes would greatly help us deal with the same issues being encountered at festivals in the UK.

- Trial 'Litter Exchanges' in campsites
- Campsite volunteer teams
- More education and information available
- Salvage Operations
- More volunteer encouragement and welfare
- Open the discussion on harm reduction
- Cleaner toilets

Waste(d) Potential at Festivals

“To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often.” Winston Churchill

The following are different reasons/causes for the levels of litter and campsite waste at festivals that have been observed:

- Drugs, alcohol and tiredness
- Lack of education and awareness
- Lack of well maintained facilities
- Anonymity within a group
- Weather

Below are some brief explanations of each observed cause. To see findings from each event please go directly to Findings.

Drugs, Alcohol and Tiredness

Vices, and the exhaustion caused by them, are the primary reason for such high quantities of camping equipment being left behind after a festival. The ‘can’t be bothered’ factor opens the door to a whole host of cognitive dissonance after a weekend of bodily abuse and, when faced with the prospect of packing everything away, taking down a tent and then carrying it all to the car, it is just too much. As soon as leaving it all behind becomes an option, for many it soon becomes the best and only option.

Lack of Education and Awareness

Nobody can be expected to make an informed decision without having been first provided with appropriate and adequate information. Information must be made both available and approachable.

Lack of well maintained facilities

Asking attendees to do something should always be supported by steps taken to enable them to do so. For example, if attendees are expected to use the portable toilets and not the bushes then it has to be ensured that the toilets are being cleaned regularly. People need two reasons to do something and only one reason to stop. One negative ‘festival toilet’ experience is easily enough to justify taking your business, quite literally, elsewhere.

Group Anonymity

Being part of a group has an appeal in a society where we feel monitored a great deal of the time. If the group is behaving in a positive way then this has a certain quality to it, in so much as people are doing good because it is the norm and not for personal glory. Inversely, if the group is on a negative behaviour path then it gives attendees free rein to do all the things

they know they shouldn't do or that they would not normally do. Examples of this are defecating in or setting fire to someone else's tent, sometimes one and then the other.

Weather

In reality, all manner of systems can be put in place to reduce the amount of waste left behind by attendees but if, on the Sunday evening, it pours down with rain and tents get flooded then it stands to reason that more tents will be abandoned the next day than if it had not rained. The task of disposing with rubbish and taking possessions back to the car or bus needs to be made as easy as possible to counteract this.

A large part of the task faced by festival production companies while setting the parameters of an event is to ensure that every single person that walks through those gates has had enough information presented to them before arrival in order for them to be able to make educated decisions and be a positive, active participant in what the festival is trying to achieve. This comes down to how information is disseminated and the importance placed on this information at the point of ticket sale and the point of arrival.

Waste(d) Potential at Festivals- Findings

Bins

At each event the amount of litter on the ground in the arena area and around the campsites was noticeably less than at festivals in the UK. This is down to three factors: respect, ease and encouragement.

At *Lightning in a Bottle* there was no litter on the ground. The festival goes to great lengths to encourage this by having large numbers of well-signposted bins being regularly emptied. The idea of making it easy for people to dispose of waste by placing bins where they are most needed was also visible at *Bonnaroo* through the bin system employed there. They are light to move and put up, clearly labelled with diagrams and colour coordinated lids and easy to change the bags once they are full. This meant that bins could easily be set up in an area attracting litter dumping. Through providing an option it gives attendees a choice and makes the right option easier to accomplish.

Trash Talkers™

Volunteers at *Bonnaroo* were stationed at bins to help attendees use the correct bins and to inform them if an item was recyclable, compostable or to go into landfill. They were also tasked with ensuring that of all the bins at their station remained correctly sorted and not contaminated by incorrect use. Volunteers stationed at these positions were also briefed to praise people using the bins correctly and educate those who weren't, in an encouraging, non-judgemental way. The bins were emptied as soon as they were full and then left ready to be picked up by the patrolling waste collection teams with vehicles. This worked well on many levels as keeping the waste sorted properly not only saves time going through full

bags of rubbish once they have been collected but it also shows attendees that it matters but also that it isn't a difficult thing to do.

The Clean Vibes Trading Post

Clean Vibes is a company dedicated to responsible waste management at outdoor festivals and events. Their mission is to encourage and promote recycling and proper waste disposal. The amount of trash entering landfill and incinerators is decreased by increasing the amount of recyclable material collected and delivered to recycling centres. This was done at *Bonnaroo* through a points reward system where certain actions were rewarded with points that could then be exchanged for prizes or food tokens.

Items that could be exchanged for points included small bags full of used cigarette ends and sorted bags of recycling. Prizes ranged from food tokens to high value, desirable festival products that were all donated to the cause. These incentives served to provide the variety of options needed to motivate such a variety of attendees.

By the Sunday, the Trading Post for Clean Vibes was busy as word had spread and attendees were switched on to the potential gains of participation. Towards the end of the weekend a large construction bag was placed in front of the Trading Post with a sign asking for donations. This proved very successful with a variety of usable items being donated by attendees.

Land Ownership

In talking to members of different production companies, the hot topic of the moment in festivals is buying land to be able to hold events. The majority of a festival's current worries would disappear immediately if the festival owned the land it was held on.

At *Bonnaroo* the festival site is now owned by the production company and there have been noticeable changes to the attendee experience as a result. A major development arising from the fact that the festival owns the land is the transition from temporary to permanent infrastructure. The festival now has a permanent stage and two large, clean toilet blocks with a number of easily accessible water refill points along the outside wall of one of the permanent structures. Adding permanent structures to the festival site increases its value as an event space to not only the festival itself but also, the local community. This is being done through a mixture of investments⁹ by the festival production company and local authorities who are currently working on increasing the water capabilities of the site to enable more events to be held throughout the year.

Compost

One great benefit arising from *Bonnaroo* owing the land is the fact that they are now able to manage their compostable waste on-site, leave it in a dedicated area to allow the natural

9 - <http://www.manchestertimes.com/1-4m-water-project-set-for-bonnaroo/>

processes to take place and later use it to supplement the soil to grow herbs and vegetables in Planet Roo¹⁰, the 'green' part of the festival. This is a fantastic example of effective use of site ownership and waste being turned into something of practical use and value without consuming lots of fuel taking it off site to be processed.

Water and Hydration

Getting enough water for thousands of people is one of the biggest challenges for festival organisers who, in creating a temporary city, need to plan how everyone can stay hydrated. One of the biggest risks at festivals to personal safety is dehydration due to the combination of hot weather and drug/alcohol consumption. Each event had something in place to address this.

Tennessee summers are hot, with temperatures averaging 30 degrees. In response to this, *Bonnaroo* had put a lot of emphasis on offering accessible points for attendees to remain hydrated and placing hydration as a priority in their planning. They did this both online through the *Bonnaroo* Code¹¹ and at the event itself through signage, availability of free, filtered water and act endorsements reminding attendees to drink water. Having performing artists encourage rehydration worked well in starting the conversation amongst attendees and, in coming from a role model, resulted in people being aware of the need to consume water. There was also information available explaining the benefits of refilling a water bottle over using a new one and discouraging the use of plastic bottles at the festival.

The saving of resources was also promoted through the 'Refill Revolution'¹² incentive, where attendees were given the opportunity to purchase a limited edition steel cup that could be refilled at bars for a discounted price. The cups were sold at \$15 each and were limited in number, making the cups a practical souvenir of the weekend and something to be held on to. Also available were steel, refillable water bottles, for a price, with *Bonnaroo* branding on them to make rehydrating as easy and 'part of the experience' as possible. One of the reasons identified for attending festivals is the search for a sense of belonging amongst a group; having incentives like this in place harnesses that desire and takes it further by inviting people to become a part of positive change.

Lightning in a Bottle proudly states that it has offered free, filtered drinking water to its attendees for the past six years. This is supported by their Sustainability Action Guide who encourage attendees to bring a water bottle to the event and fill it up.

Firefly Festival had a different solution. Working with Event Water Solutions¹³ they managed to save 320,000 water bottles and around 189,000 litres of water through the use of their manned water refill points. The water refill station that they provided consisted of a top of the

10 - <https://www.bonnaroo.com/sustainability/#planet-roo>

11 - Bonnaroo Code - <https://www.bonnaroo.com/experience/the-code/>

12 - <http://steelysdrinkware.com/bonnaroo-launches-refill-revolution-to-cut-event-waste/>

13 - <http://www.eventwatersolutions.com/>

range water filter that can connect to any water source within 1000 feet, the water then came out of nozzles that were operated by volunteers. Cheerful volunteers then refilled any container brought to them without spilling any, not only saving on water wastage but also making the experience a positive one for the attendee and therefore more likely to use the service again or recommend it to a friend. At this event the water stations inside the arena, where this initiative was taking place, were sponsored by Camelbak¹⁴, who also had stands selling their refillable bottles and water containers.

Salvage Operations

Working with charities and organisations during the post festival clean-up is a great way to create positive action from the negative act of attendees leaving stuff behind after a festival has finished.

Lightning in a Bottle, due to the 'pack it in pack it out' ethos¹⁵ that they were implementing, whereby attendees take home everything they bring with them, did not have any salvage operations planned. The idea was based upon the premise that if everyone takes everything home then there is no need for groups to come in post-show and comb through the leftovers in search of usable equipment. During the clean-up of the event it soon became evident that people had left usable equipment behind, showing that, no matter how hard a festival tries to instil a positive ethos, there is always a need for contingency plans. It is better to call an organisation on the Monday morning to inform them that nothing has been left behind and to call off the salvage operation than to see any amount of usable equipment go into the bin.

Clean Vibes¹⁶, the waste management company for *Bonnaroo*, has acknowledged the need for a different approach to festival clean-up. Collecting, and disposing of, all the usable waste themselves incurs greater effort, manpower and cost. Instead, they work with a local organisation, The Gear Closet¹⁷, that resells outdoor gear and all proceeds go towards TenneSEA¹⁸; a group that promotes local youth environmental activities. The Gear Closet provided its own transport and volunteers and worked in close communications with the Clean Vibes through one main, knowledgeable, enthusiastic point of contact to ensure that everything was being done in accordance with site policy and that the most was made of everybody's time.

The Gear Closet collected around 4,000 lbs (1800 KGs) of usable equipment¹⁹, not including food. That is hundreds of tents, sleeping bags, rolls mats and tarps that, instead of being sent to landfill, have been used to bring volunteers together and create funding for local community projects. This is an achievement that should be well publicised and celebrated in

- 14 - <https://international.camelbak.com/>
- 15 - <http://lightninginabottle.org/camping/>
- 16 - <https://www.cleanvibes.com/>
- 17 - <http://gearcloset.org/>
- 18 - <http://www.caribbean-sea.org/tennesea/>
- 19 - <https://www.bonnaroo.com/wp-www-bonnaroo-com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Bonnaroo-Annual-Sustainability-Report.pdf>

order to encourage more festivals to cooperate with charities and organisations, divert more waste from landfill and supply more support to local causes.

Donation points were set up at each campsite hub in the attendee campsites, for any unwanted items that people weren't taking home or anything they wanted to donate to a good cause. These hubs were manned throughout the weekend and on Monday morning each of these donations point had donations left inside of them, mostly of a very high quality and with next to no litter or rubbish. This shows the potential in giving attendees the option of doing good and should be promoted and explored further.

Firefly Festival allows Code Purple²⁰ access to the campsite grounds once the attendees have left the premises. Code Purple is a project that has been initiated to provide supplies to the homeless population in Kent County. Shelters are opened within Kent County when temperatures drop to freezing. This project looks to repurpose the camping equipment left behind by people attending *Firefly Festival*. The Code Purple team walk the camping area in search of reusable durable camping products that include; sleeping bags, tents, bed rolls, reusable water bottles, lanterns, flashlights, clothing, footwear and non-perishable foods. All items are cleaned and/or reconditioned and distributed to the homeless community, via Code Purple, based on needs.

There were two forms of collection at the event:

1. The first method allowed participants to donate by simply leaving their donations at the campsite. Code Purple volunteer campsite staff provided a purple card (similar to a door hanger) with a zip tie for festival participants to put on their donations so that they could be identified. On the Monday after the event, teams were divided into sections of the camping area to assess and collect all usable equipment.
2. The second method of collection is the placement of Code Purple Tents at each Camping Hub. The tents were manned by Code Purple team members for the duration of the event with the final collection time happening on the Monday after the event. Each group of volunteers in the campsite had received a briefing before being sent out into the campsites, explaining what was being collected and how best to do so. This ensured that every volunteer was acting with correct information and that the items being collected were relevant and of high quality.

No Plastic!

Both *Lightning in a Bottle* and *Bonnaroo* had 'no plastic' rules in place to reduce the amount of plastic being used inside the main festival arena. This meant that no plastic was being sold at the bars or by the food vendors. Cups for beer and beverages that have traditionally been made of plastics were made of corn-starch, a natural material that breaks down over time. More information could have been displayed at bars and food vendors to educate festival goers on the change and what is expected from them as a result, namely putting the cup in the compost bin once it has fulfilled its purpose. Once attendees have been informed

20 - <http://www.codepurplekentcounty.com/>

then they became an active part of the no plastic movement, educating others when they see the need to and taking ownership of the initiative.

Expectation vs. Reality

“Where there is great power there is great responsibility.” Winston Churchill 1906

Having so many people in one place, coming together for relatively the same motives contains within it great potential. How that potential is nurtured and channelled is completely up to the festival itself. Festival production companies collect all of the ingredients necessary to create a festival and set the parameters for the entire event. With this comes the responsibility to create an environment able to help people make the most of what the festival has to offer.

For example, the amount of litter dropped on the floor at a festival has a direct correlation to the number of clearly visible, not-overflowing bins that are available for use and the number of staff tasked with changing them on a regular basis. As soon as litter is seen on the floor it becomes, at first, socially acceptable to drop litter and very soon becomes the social norm. At this point, wading through litter to try and wedge your litter into an overflowing bin can feel like a fool's errand.

Months can be spent providing the correct information, phrased in just the right way and matched with just the right motivation or incentivisation but, when it comes down to it, if there is no information or incentivisation to follow it up, once at the festival, then all the hard work can be undone in a moment. Pack it in/Pack it out, an incentive at *Lightning in a Bottle* whereby attendees take home everything they bring with them, is a prime example of this need for requests to be followed by affirmative action. This is covered further in the Findings section below.

Here are some ways that the events I attended, during my Fellowship travels, have gone about setting these parameters and maintaining them during the festival in order to try and reduce the negative impact of any of the above points.

Expectations Vs. Reality - Findings

Lightning in a Bottle clearly set out their expectation of attendees regarding waste before arrival. Information provided through the website can be summarised by taking three small segments that each address a different point.

1 - What we are - “At the heart of *Lightning in a Bottle* is a deep commitment to the preservation of mother earth and spreading environmental awareness. Thanks to a collective effort from staff and community, *Lightning in a Bottle* has been the only US festival to receive the Outstanding Award from A Greener Festival Foundation 5 years in a row, officially making it the greenest festival in America!”

2 - What we want - "WE WANT YOU to Leave It Better, Leave It Beautiful! We want YOU to leave the event with better tools for your life, and leave the land better and more beautiful than you found it. As an integral part of our community, please find ways to "Leave A Positive Trace" from our time together."

3 - What you can do to realise this - Sustainable Action Guide that provides a number of areas in which action from an attendee actively helps reach goals and maintain the high standard. Below are the seven points covered:

'Pack it in + Pack it out = No Trash Left Behind

'Take your camp trash home! Everything must go! Leave space in your car to take your trash home. Clean your campsite and sort your trash throughout the weekend. Feel free to bring sorted compost to one of the compost stations inside the event space.'

This is not a completely outlandish request. If there is space for items coming to the festival then there must be space also when leaving, it is basic mathematics, but come Monday morning, when attendees see other people leaving bags of rubbish then the motivation after a weekend of revelry seems to evaporate very quickly. Why should they be the only one with bags of rubbish in their car when no one else is doing it? The importance given to the power of the individual all through the build-up to the festival is quickly undone by the ease with which a hungover person can disappear into a herd of careless attendees and so the negative mentality spreads tenfold faster than its positive counterpart.

On Sunday, members of the litter team were sent to the campsites with rubbish bags to encourage and facilitate the tidying of campsites. This proved very effective in the areas that were reached. It also served as a non-preachy opportunity to remind attendees about the Pack it in/Pack it out plan for the following day, namely that everyone was expected to take their rubbish away with them. Creating a human connection with the person who is going to have to tidy everything up, if you can't be bothered before you leave, can go a long way to motivating a human response.

On Monday morning, every member of the Green Team waste management staff, a predominantly volunteer powered sector during the event, was tasked with helping people take their bags of rubbish home. So, whereas at another event the litter teams would be busy on the Monday morning with starting the mammoth task of cleaning up after a well-attended, 4-day house party, at *Lightning in a Bottle* the Green Team spent Monday morning helping attendees carry their things back to the car, rubbish included. This is a prime example of a festival making a request of its attendees and then putting people and systems in place in order to facilitate the success of the request. The Green Team taking the time to help individuals with their rubbish also served to acknowledge each individual's effort and to congratulate them on being the difference and making the effort to care, thus separating attendees from the crowd and removing the anonymity of being one of thousands trying to leave the festival site.

By taking their rubbish home people were setting themselves apart from the festival norm. The human interaction involved in being reminded of this while it is happening has great value and adds worth to the overall experience, especially to a part of the festival that no one looks forward to and is usually seen as the inconvenient step between partying and recovering. In reality, there was still rubbish left behind in the campsites, broken gazebos and a very small number of tents. Even taking into account the waste left behind it still made a notable difference to use the Monday morning of a festival to help attendees clean up and pack away. Encouraging and enabling the manpower while it is an option, however tired or hungover, is much more effective than waiting for attendees to leave before making a start.

Two enthusiastic volunteers were able to motivate an entire group to clean up their camp and carry it to a suitable place. This is touched on more in the later section 'For The Love Of Volunteers.' Having this presence in the campsite on Monday morning also brings an amount of accountability into play for the patrons, once help has been provided, and those around you who are cleaning up. An active effort has to be made to sneak away without taking part in the operation. Positive accountability has a great role to play in promoting desired behaviour at festivals.

This initiative is a prime example of a festival setting a standard and then taking active steps towards ensuring that the standard be maintained or improved upon. In addressing possible barriers attendees may come up against, in this case carrying a bag of rubbish to the car, it makes it that much easier for attendees to willingly participate.

'Choose Green Transportation

'Carpool with friends or join a rideshare. Take the Lightning Bus!'

Attendees are likely to already be sharing a ride and, if not, options had been provided. Those who rode the Lightning Bus from various surrounding cities were the only ones allowed to leave behind their rubbish. Each bus full of attendees that arrived was given an engaging briefing by the head of the waste management team informing them that bags of rubbish should be sorted and brought to the bus from the campsites so that it could be taken from there.

On Monday morning members of the litter teams helped attendees transport their rubbish from the campsites to the bus or car parks. In doing so they are acknowledging the fact that attendees are tired and are less likely, without help, to take their things back to the car. The amount of waste avoided by doing this more than justifies the effort exerted and is something that should be considered by all events seeking to reduce campsite waste.

Become a Steward

'Go out of your way to learn something new, take advantage of the classes and workshops to elevate yourself. Bring what you learn home with you and continue to grow.'

This is a direct instruction to the attendee to come to the festival and better themselves. The festival had provided a series of opportunities for people to learn something that could be

directly implemented to improve their lives. A wide programme of talks, workshops and discussions were put on in order to accomplish this. The programme covered topics in line with the festival itself, such as sustainable living, and were held in wonderfully creative and artistically designed spaces. The workshops and talks were well attended and enthusiastically received, largely due to the fact that consideration had been given to the timings of the workshops in line with the music schedule.

While the festival may be about peace and green living, if a top DJ is doing a set that goes on until 5am then the chance of attendees making the 7am yoga session is significantly reduced. This balance between ethos and excitement is something festival organisers need to be aware of in planning, and careful thought given to which one they give most importance. *Lightning in a Bottle* managed the balance well, with most stages going quiet around 2am and a great many people participating in the learning experiences.

Pack smart, Pack light

‘Purchase bulk over individually wrapped. De-package all food and products - it’s less to take home. Bring reusable cups, plates, utensils etc. Bring what you need and coordinate with friends.’

This is another easy request to make, ‘Think and communicate’ is a far cry from asking attendees to grow their own organic vegetables but it does serve to remind people of what kind of experience they are taking part in and the part that they play in this. This seeks to separate itself from the single use consumerism that is evident in American society and invites the attendee to do the same.

B.Y.O.B.

‘Bring a water bottle and fill up at our free, filtered water stations. Do not purchase and bring single use plastic water bottles!’

The festival proudly offers free, filtered drinking water to all attendees, making it easier to refill a bottle and stay hydrated. LIB also took every opportunity possible to discourage the use of plastic at the event which was noticeable during the post show clean-up where there was less plastic than any event previously attended by the author.

Respect The Wildlife

‘We are guests in a place that many animals and plants call home. Stay in designated camp areas and do not harass or harm any wildlife.’

This is another simple request. It is unlikely that members of the public buy tickets in order to harass the local animals. There is so much to be seen and experienced inside the festival that most people would not give the outside world a second thought until Monday morning when the festival has finished and they are ready to go home. Putting this on the list of

actions shows that it is a priority to the festival and also means that just by having fun inside the festival you are doing something on the Sustainable Action Guide. This makes approaching the other things on the guide seem more realistic and achievable.

Lead By Example

'If you see trash on the ground, pick it up and throw it away! Show how to be responsible. Teach newcomers what it means to be part of the *Lightning in a Bottle* community.'

A challenge to the festival attendee, putting them in the position of role model, teacher and responsibility. It gives each person the option of not leaving litter on the ground and explains how and why this is a good idea in order to build up the case of not littering. The more reasons that are presented to the attendee for positive action then the greater the reasoning needed to justify littering. Once so much information has been made clearly available ignorance is no longer such an easily used excuse.

Recycling

Bins were plentiful, well signposted and regularly emptied. At each station there were three types of receptacles - Landfill, Compost and Recycling. Items that were regularly placed in the wrong receptacle were displayed above the correct bin to change this behaviour and by Saturday the vast majority of attendees were knowledgeable on which items went in which bins.

Members of the Lightning Team litter pickers were also sent in search of litter to pick up and, indeed, there was very little to be found. This visible effort and presence sends a clear message to attendees that the festival is making the effort and so should they.

The Clean Up Song

By far and away one of the most effective methods of motivation encountered during the Fellowship experience. At *Lightning in a Bottle*, as certain stages closed for the night the final song was The Clean Up Song to encourage people to take a moment before rushing off to help clean up the mess that is inevitably made during the party. House lights are put on and music for encouragement that reminds people to stay aware of their surroundings and the waste generated. It worked better than could ever be expected and in under five minutes the dance area was nearly spotless with no noticeable litter to be found. The link will direct you to a recording of it and its influence that has been posted online.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7_RV3zzk08

Engaging revellers in the moment when they are full of energy and excitement gives them the opportunity to interact with the festival. Instead of just being the recipient of entertainment they are able to show their appreciation but tidying up a little before they leave. The ripple effect of seeing other peers picking up rubbish is immediately noticeable

and so we have awareness, education, encouragement and positive peer pressure in one simple reggae song.

For the Love of Volunteers

“There is no scarcity of opportunity to make a living at what you love; there's only scarcity of resolve to make it happen.” Wayne Dyer

Volunteer organisation and welfare are the two key factors in ensuring a positive volunteer experience. It is important to make sure that volunteers always have a task, that they are clear on what the task is, how best they can accomplish it and that they are well looked after while they do so. These may feel like very obvious and simple points but volunteers are very often looked upon and treated as an inconvenience when they should be looked after and praised. Making sure that work put in by volunteers is getting acknowledged when a task has been completed well will also go a long way towards motivating people to stay on task and take pride in what they are doing.

At *Lightning in a Bottle* and *Bonnaroo*, the author volunteered with the waste management teams during both events and also post-show to participate in the clean-up process. Every volunteer was given a t-shirt that was only available by volunteering at the festival. This immediately makes volunteers feel included and addresses the belonging that many people go to festivals in search of. Volunteering provides the possibility for new connections to be made between people who otherwise may never get the chance to meet. Each person comes with their own motives, experiences and skills set that can be used to better place volunteers in roles. Each person must be recognised for the unique skills that they bring to the experience.

When working voluntarily in exchange for a ticket it is easy to forget the cost of the ticket, which has been paid as a deposit by each volunteer, once the festival has begun. At this point there are a few variables that can really affect how a volunteer shift can go. A huge difference can be made to a person's day by being missed out on the packed lunch rounds or, alternatively, being brought an ice cream at the hottest part of the day. It can be the small things that make or break a shift of working 'for free.'

Both events, that the author attended, looked after their volunteers very well, with expectations clearly laid out in briefings at the start of each shift. Each person was also made to feel as though they were a vital part of the team.

***Lightning in a Bottle* Volunteer Experience**

After a health and safety briefing each morning we were given a certain area of the festival to cover, clearly shown on a map, the exact bins that we were to maintain for the duration of the shift and a briefing for the radio.

We were then given cold organic energy drinks, bin bags, personal protective equipment and the keys to a buggy and trailer. We filled up our trailer with full bags of rubbish, ensuring they stayed separated into landfill, recycling and compost, by going from one bin station to another emptying any full bins and checking for cross-contamination in others. Each bin station consisted of four to eight bins depending on the predicted need in that specific area and each bin was clearly labelled either, 'Landfill', 'Recycling' or 'Compost' with big signs above each receptacle. Signs like this made them easier to spot and therefore less likely to be forgotten during busy times. Volunteers were asked to make a note of type, location and purity, each time a bin was changed. Once the trailer was full we took it all back to the main waste and recycling point, our HQ, and put each bag in its respective container.

The trailer was filling up every 1 ½ to 2 hours and that meant we were regularly checking in with supervisors at HQ who were making sure we had enough supplies and were staying hydrated. This also provided a good opportunity for advice, retraining and praise to be exchanged which ensured continued enthusiasm.

Being given ownership of an area meant that volunteers were soon able to take pride in their work which, consequently, resulted in work well done. This pride in participating, the gratitude we received from attendees for our work and the regular check ins at HQ, meant that volunteers stayed dedicated to the task, despite the many distractions that are inevitable present at a festival. The fact that cold refreshments were available at HQ, on days when the temperature reached 35 degrees, was also a real motivation to get the job done and done well.

On Sunday, volunteers were split into pairs and sent into the campsites with bags and smiles to encourage attendees to tidy up and spread the good word of recycling. The ripple effect that occurs when the festival is seen to be making an effort was clearly visible during this activity. Whenever we were helping a group tidy their camp area up we would regularly be approached by members of surrounding camps asking for bin bags with which they could clean up their camp. We always made a point to pass by those camp areas afterwards to congratulate them on being a reason why the festival is so great to ensure their actions have been acknowledged and appreciated. This activity really is the most effective way to get attendees to tidy up their waste and spread good practice throughout the campsite. A little praise goes a long way.

The post-show clean-up was made fun mostly by the use of music for motivation and cold refreshing drinks to keep us going. While the workload was heavily reduced by the Pack it in/ Pack it out initiative, the days were hot so having cold drinks brought to us every time they were needed really made the difference, as a volunteer, to the quality of work.

Bonnaroo Volunteer Experience

The main challenge at *Bonnaroo* was to be able to organise so many volunteers and cover such a large space. During the show, volunteers were given areas to pick up litter or stations to work at. These stations consisted of groups of bins, one for recycling, one for

compost and one for landfill. The volunteers placed at these stations were asked to encourage attendees to use the correct bin and to educate them in a friendly way on how they can reduce the amount of landfill waste they create.

The volunteer stations were well distributed across the site, and volunteers were given ownership of their station. Clear information was given to make the role easier, such as pouring out liquids before putting a container in the bin and gloves were provided to help with hygiene. Stations were visited regularly providing volunteers with water, bags, gloves, encouragement and a quick quality control check of the bins. The responsibility worked very well, for the most part, and could easily be incorporated into festival waste management in the UK. The key is simple tasks, clearly explained.

A meal token was given for each shift worked and was usable at a selection of food vendors inside the arena. This worked well as it gave volunteers a taste of the attendee experience and avoided the need for separate catering facilities to be provided just for the volunteers.

The volunteer campsite was away from the general camping area and there was a very positive atmosphere. There was plenty of space for camping and a wooded area to the side with space to rest out of the sun. Everyone there was contributing to the festival in some way or another and, with that knowledge, came a respect and a tidy campsite. There was an atmosphere of cohesive collaboration and goodwill.

For the post-show clean-up, the volunteer team was close to 300 people. There was much more precise organisation in place and needed to ensure such a large site got the attention that it needed. Volunteers were given time on the Monday to move their things over to a separate camping area in the shade and rest a bit in order to recover from the weekend. This worked well and most volunteers arrived looking well rested and ready to work on the Tuesday.

A small amount of care and attention to help volunteers meet their basic needs - food, water, a jacket - went a very long way towards motivating each volunteer and this was directly visible in the quality of work done during their shift. The area that they had been asked to keep clean was cleaner, the trash better sorted and the overall output more productive. 'A happy worker is a productive worker' only becomes more relevant when you take out the money element usually applied to work. If a volunteer felt well looked after, they felt able to go beyond the basic minimum and take pride in their work, resulting in time being much better used.

Salvage Operations

At *Firefly Festival*, every Code Purple volunteer was clear on the task that they had to do, how they were going to do it and areas they were to be performed in. Each was provided with a t-shirt or a high visibility jacket to wear in order to make them distinguishable from security or the litter teams. Volunteers worked in groups to fill a truck or van with sleeping bags, tents, roll mats, reusable water bottles, lanterns, flashlights, clothing, footwear and non-perishable foods that had been left behind by festival goers. Everyone appeared to be

upbeat, energetic and equipped for the role with personal protective equipment, namely closed toe shoes and gloves.

Code Purple, an initiative put in place at the festival, aimed to offer two forms of collection at the event. The first method allowed participants to donate by simply leaving their unwanted items at the campsite. Attendees could then get a purple card (similar to a door hanger) with a cable tie from volunteer staff to make any donations visible. On the Monday following the festival, the camping area was divided into sections to then be covered by volunteers ready to look for these tags and collect all usable equipment. The second method of collection was the placement of Code Purple Tents at each Camping Hub as a donation point. The tents were to be manned by Code Purple team members for the duration of the event with the final collection time happening on the Monday after the event.

At *Bonnaroo*, the author was part of the litter management team during and after the festival but was not, unfortunately, able to be part of the salvage team once the festival had finished. The salvage team, a different team of volunteers, comes in once the festival has finished to salvage what is salvageable to be used elsewhere as previously discussed, see page 11. The author was, though, able to be part of discussions around salvage from the festival and found that the salvage teams at *Bonnaroo* had seen incredible results saving hundreds of tents, sleeping bags coolers, and numerous other usable items, from landfill and ensuring that they find a use local to the event. This focus on using the festival's waste and surplus was also visible in the very successful Food Recovery programme.

The Food Recovery programme²¹ was in its seventh year at *Bonnaroo* which finds homes for surplus food made at the festival. This should become a must at all festivals as you can guarantee that somewhere near a festival someone is going hungry and, as a valid contributor to its community, a festival should make efforts to share its surplus with those who are without. In 2016 this programme saw 9 tons of food donated to the community through a local food bank, an incredible achievement and a prime example of how much food gets wasted at festivals and how it can instead be put to better use.

Another element of *Bonnaroo's* salvaging successes is the gathering of used cooking oil from caterers and food vendors. In 2016 3.8 tons were collected by Yellow Dog Renewables and taken off site in order to be processed into biofuel. Finally, over 77 tons of rubbish was taken to Wastaway²² in Morrison, TN to be made into fuel pellets as a substitute for coal. All of these initiatives worked together to divert 65% of the festivals waste away from landfill and towards better purposes.

While efforts are being made in the UK to make the best use of the waste generated by festivals the above examples should serve as inspiration and examples of how properly co-ordinated efforts can produce real results once they have the full support of the festival itself. The allowing and supporting of salvage efforts by festivals is one of the major

21 - <https://www.bonnaroo.com/wp-www-bonnaroo-com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Bonnaroo-Annual-Sustainability-Report.pdf>, p.6.

22 - <https://www.wastaway.com>

recommendations of this report as campsite waste is one of the biggest problems being faced by festivals in the UK.

Recommendations

“Once people tell me I can’t do stuff, I’m going to go and make it happen.”- Faheem Rashad Najm

Below is a summary of the main recommendations being made as a result of the research carried out. If the reader would like any more information on any of the topics, or help implementing them in any form, please do not hesitate to get in contact. Let’s make real change happen.

- **Litter Exchange** - Games with recycling, Info boards, Donation point, Harm reduction, Chill out area
- **The Clean Up Song** - Engaging attendees using the one common motive of festivals, music!
- **Raise the Quality of Living** - Help attendees meet expectations by providing a respectable environment.
- **Campsite Volunteer Teams** - Create human connection with attendees, incentives and prizes
- **Salvage Operations** - Less landfill waste = less cost, helping local causes

Litter Exchange

The litter exchange is a hub in a campsite that focusses on education and engagement. The following elements are placed together to try and address as many of the reasons for campsite mess as possible and, ideally, result in a cleaner, more pleasant experience for both the festival organisers and attendees - games with recycling, information boards, harm reduction, chill out area and donation point.

A great deal of encouragement needs to be offered to the people who you would wish to return the following year, those that follow the ethos of a cleaner festival. One of the ideas is to offer those who show commitment to more aware behaviour, and sign up at the Exchange, earlier access to buying tickets the following year. This works to acknowledge the difference between caring and not caring and to encourage the right-thinking people to come back, and bring their friends, which encourages the same behaviour to not only continue but to also be perpetuated. Creating a sense of club-like exclusivity based not on financial

means, such as VIP, but on displaying behaviour the festival wants to promote, is something that, over time, will work but first needs to be properly tailored to the event and marketed to attendees on a case by case basis.

Saying thank you to those who come and use the Litter Exchange and showing appreciation for those who take advantage of what is on offer is a clear way for the festival, at this point being fronted by volunteers, to show that this is behaviour that they want at their festival. Saying thank you goes a long way and costs nothing to set up and implement.

All volunteers running the booth need to be clear on the motives for them being there, well informed on the topics and ready to have discussions with any attendee who is ready to take the time and talk while there is so much else on offer.

Games with recycling

- Set up fun fair games to be played with empty cans from the campsite. Attendees then bring their recyclable waste and play to win food and drinks that have been donated by vendors.
- Prizes are to be donated by vendors and external companies that are in support of environmental issues. Have high target to win free ticket draw, or Earlybird ticket upgrade or VIP treatment.
- Encourage players to return by offering entrance into draws for those who are seen to be using the service.
- Spread awareness by giving stamps and stickers to those who show an interest.
- Have a form of acknowledgement in place for those who get someone else to bring their recycling and play.

Info boards

- With information on waste from previous years and steps that are in place to help manage it better.
- Calculate clean-up costs and how they could be better spent: 'Did you see this stage? No? Clean up your camp, send us a photo and if enough of you do it we will be able to build it next year'
- Display information on plastic water bottles, the harm they do and how they can be avoided.
- Information on the role attendees play, their responsibilities and how they can have the most positive effect on the festival.

Harm Reduction

- Allow organisations, such as Dance Safe, to be a part of festivals.
- Testing kits should be available in the campsites at any time to account for the fact that the worst decisions are usually made in the early hours.
- Have relevant information up at campsite hubs that spread knowledge of dangerous drugs circulating at the festival, how best to deal with them if accidentally taken and who to contact.

Chill out area

- Safe space for down moments should be provided in an environment so full of sensory stimulation.
- Friendly faces in campsite - the value of a friendly face in a dark hour. While it may feel as though the finite resources of a festival could be better spent by manning positions elsewhere, having a visible, approachable presence in the campsites can be the difference between life and death. They can then act as a point of radio contact with security, medical and welfare in the case of an emergency that attendees know will always be available.
- Informal upcycling workshops for any attendees that show an interest
- Creates an opportunity to start conversations with attendees.

Donation point

- Drop off point for any unwanted camping equipment, food, clothes etc.
- Those who donate can be entered into a draw for a free ticket next year, or VIP upgrade, or earlier access to tickets.
- Information on salvage operations to explain where all the donations and reclaimed items end up being used.
- Monday morning meeting point for volunteer teams working in the campsites.

The Clean Up Song

An engaging solution to combat against apathy, negative socially acceptable behaviour and lack of awareness. This is done by working with intoxication, positive peer pressure from artists and social groups, education and a catchy song.

- Turn the house lights on and play a song at the end of busy sets.
- Get artists to cover the song at the end of their gig.
- Have volunteers give out 'Cleans up nicely!' badges to any attendees that get involved.
- Play song enough times over the weekend at different venues so that everyone has heard it at least once.
- Take the clean-up song to the campsites throughout the weekend and on the Monday morning to assist volunteers in motivating attendees to clear up.

Raise the Quality of Living

Attendees cannot be expected to have any respect for their surroundings if said surroundings are dirty or overflowing with faeces. This is a simple human reaction and must be addressed before any substantial change can be made.

- Clean toilets and more money dedicated to keeping them clean until the campsites close on Monday.

- More bins and more money dedicated to keeping them empty until Monday morning.
- Manned water points in each campsite to avoid muddy lakes being created by intoxicated attendees.

Campsite Volunteer Teams

Using the great potential workforce of attendees is a must for festivals wanting to change attendee mentalities and reduce costs during the clean-up of an event.

- Non- patronising help and encouragement with tidying up campsites
- Use exclusive rewards. Make attendees tents more valuable by spraying festival logo on them. This would incentivise attendees to take their tent home with them. Give prizes that are exclusive to those who help.
- Make attendees aware that participation is the only way to get these prizes/rewards.
- Be present in campsites throughout the weekend to establish rapport.
- Arrive on the Monday morning enthusiastic, sober and ready to help attendees. Behaviour as example is key.
- Acknowledge and reward volunteers who are successful in any of the above.

Salvage Operations

Sending usable camping equipment to landfill or the incinerator is unacceptable while there are so many in need who could use the items. Excuses of time constraints and land rental do not take into consideration the amount of benefit these items can provide to those who have nothing, both domestically and internationally, or the responsibility festivals have committed to through their sustainability policies. Festivals should be begging salvage companies to come to their festivals and doing as much as possible to support them once there.

- Allow salvage operations full access for as long as possible, this can only mean less to clean up.
- Communication - ensure festival production, security, waste teams and salvage organisations are all working to the same agenda. Communication to this effect, across all the working groups, is key.
- Structure - Work in supervised groups, give training, regular welfare checks.
- Catalogue and remove items – get items off site the same day, count before leaving.
- Ensure basic needs are met - water points still active, toilets still available for salvage teams.
- Provide a specific camping area for volunteers who wish to participate for multiple days.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the fact that such large quantities of perfectly usable survival equipment are being sent to landfill or incinerator here in the UK is unacceptable. In the media, the plight of many, forced to go without the very basics, is often spoken of while those very same provisions are being thrown away to the detriment of the planet and to those very same people who could make perfectly good use of the goods being sent to landfill.

Salvage operations should be recognised as a way for festivals to not only save money but also lives and should be supported, encouraged and given sufficient time for them to do their work. While salvage operations provide part of the solution, the problem as a whole cannot be resolved without a change in festival-goer mentality which can only come about through education and encouragement.

Since, and during, the Fellowship the author has launched the charity Festival Waste Reclamation and Distribution (F.W.R.D.), which sets out to reduce campsite waste left behind by attendees by taking usable items and getting them to those who are without. While still at the beginning stages of the charity, it has already had considerable success which the author intends to build upon in the future.

In 2016 F.W.R.D. formed relations with various distribution organisations and charities and was able to salvage over 30 tons of usable equipment, 26 tons of which was sent to Syria to shelter people there who have lost everything.

In 2017 F.W.R.D. seeks to improve on this figure and develop relationships with, and gain more support from, festival-goers, festival production companies, communities local to events, volunteer organisations, companies wanting to see real change effectuated through their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes and organisations that work to help those who are without.

Once F.W.R.D. has proven its effectiveness as an alternative to bulldozing everything into landfill it looks to have stands in the campsites covering elements of the Litter Exchange mentioned in the Recommendations section as it is only through positive engagement that the total quantity of abandoned goods can be reduced. F.W.R.D will work to implement the points highlighted throughout this report in being able to highlight the issue of waste, to effect change within the organisational structure of festival management in taking responsibility for the waste generated during a festival period and with the festival goers themselves.

The need of those in this country, and further afield, who are without shows no sign of decreasing. With the correct structures and support from festivals F.W.R.D. can play a small but vital role in educating attendees and getting goods, that would otherwise be incinerated or landfilled, to where they are needed most.

If, at any point throughout the reading of this report, more questions are raised in the mind of the reader than are adequately addressed then please do not hesitate to contact the author

who will happily discuss any or all of the report until satisfied. Conversations must be started in order for this situation to improve.