



Association  
of Anaesthetists

# Sustainability in anaesthesia UK

The Association of Anaesthetists have been involved in significant environmental advocacy work and national sustainability initiatives for many years. Though no formal guidelines exist, we hope to have an Association position statement published later this year.

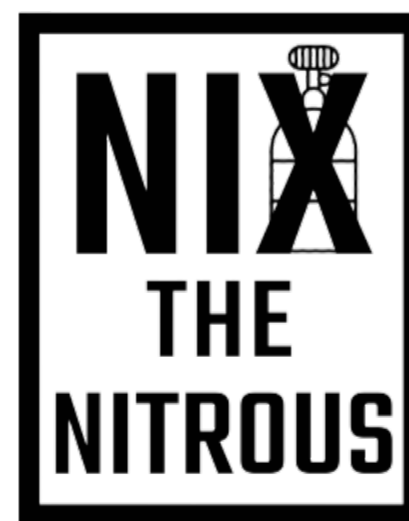
Technology plays a pivotal role in helping to promote environmental advocacy and to advance networking capabilities. The Association of Anaesthetists hosts hybrid national conferences to provide the most up to date sustainability evidence and its website houses a network map to connect sustainability champions from across the UK. A great deal of excellent progress has been made by discrete grassroots groups of anaesthetists, and the Association plays a role in connecting these groups and spreading good practice through regular national "Sharing Hours" and webinars. This aids the sharing of knowledge and expertise to prevent the wheel being reinvented.



## The Association of Anaesthetists sustainability goals are closely linked to Greener NHS, the sustainability arm of NHS England.

To date, initiatives have included the safe and sustainable disposal of anaesthetic waste, the Nitrous Oxide project and the discontinuation of Desflurane use throughout NHS Scotland and England.

Energy consumption to maintain a safe equilibrium in theatres is up to six times greater than the rest of the hospital, and one component of this is Anaesthetic Gas Scavenging Systems (AGSS). The AGSS project is an open source collaborative quality improvement toolkit for anyone to determine the environmental burden of their hospital's AGSS with tried and tested solutions to combat unnecessary energy use.



Waste is increasingly visible but only contributes to <1% of the carbon footprint of the NHS. To target the significant carbon hotspots, we need to eliminate the need to produce waste and this is where the barriers have proven challenging.

However, anaesthesia is not a solitary specialty in theatres. Medical equipment makes up to 15% of the NHS' carbon footprint and a linear economy of products is directly responsible for a large proportion of this. The transition to a circular economy is complex. The triple bottom line identifies benefit in the use of reusable products and to facilitate this, a working group is being established between the Association of Anaesthetists and a number of surgical Royal Colleges to endorse the safe use of reusable anaesthetic and surgical items. This will address safety concerns and highlight the financial and human resources currently required in the linear, compared to the circular economy. It will create a routemap of steps and barriers to overcome in order to advance this essential evolution.

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