



# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM NETWORK

## SUSTAINABILITY POLICY 2025

*This document is reviewed annually*

### 1. Our Vision, Mission And Ethos

The Sustainable Tourism Network is dedicated to inspiring, supporting and promoting sustainable and regenerative tourism which benefits businesses, visitors and communities alike.

At Sustainable Tourism Network, our vision is to lead, enable and empower Irish tourism businesses to use more sustainable and regenerative tourism methods. We also seek to help Irish tourism businesses to address any negative impacts in terms of climate change, support them in their transformation to meet our global goals and align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Our expertise in the provision of Sustainable Tourism Network's mission is to offer Irish tourism businesses high-quality training in responsible and sustainable tourism. Through our network, we aim to unite like-minded organisations into a forward-thinking community where collaboration, networking, and shared learning are not just opportunities—but essential actions driving collective sustainability impact. Through our events, we foster meaningful connections that accelerate environmental and social progress across sectors

### 2. We Follow The UN Tourism (Formerly UNWTO) Definition

At Sustainable Tourism Network (STN) we believe that sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts while addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities (UN Tourism, n.d.). We therefore aim to reduce our negative effects and increase our positive impacts.

### 3. We Believe In Continuous Improvement

Just like the many clients we proudly support, we are on an inspiring journey towards sustainability in our business operations. While we acknowledge that we aren't flawless, our unwavering commitment to constant improvement fuels our progress. Our mission is to guide the Irish tourism sector towards a greener future, and we believe in leading by example. We embrace the fact that sustainability is a never-ending journey, and we are excited about the endless possibilities for growth and improvement that lie ahead. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we've formed a green team with our sister company Vagabond Tours Ltd, who meet once a month to discuss all things sustainability. Together, we can make a difference and continue this journey towards a more sustainable future.



## 4. We Measure And Work Towards Reducing Our Resource Consumption

Since our evolution from Ecotourism Ireland to the Sustainable Tourism Network, we've experienced significant growth. This transformation has allowed us to serve a broader spectrum of the tourism community.

Our team cherishes the camaraderie of regular office days but also embraces the flexibility of working from home several days a week.

We share our office space with our sister company, Vagabond Tours Ltd., fostering a collaborative environment. This shared space allows us to jointly manage our resource consumption, furthering our commitment to sustainability. We strive to minimise our individual impacts through our home office policy (for more details, please refer to section 5).

Together with Vagabond we measure our overall office consumption on a monthly basis, ensuring we stay accountable and committed to our sustainability goals.

### 4a. Energy Consumption

STN and Vagabond Tours measure the total office electricity use once a month. We aim to reduce our energy consumption by:

- Having solar panels on the roof of our office building
- Installing and maintaining light-emitting diode (LED) light bulbs
- Turning off light switches when leaving rooms
- Unplugging appliances when not in use
- Setting our laptops to eco mode

We have been actively engaged in energy reduction practices since 2019 and we have been actively monitoring our energy usage since 2023. We aim to reduce our energy use by 1% by the end of 2025.

In addition to our own activities, we ask our members to engage in energy saving measures as part of their own sustainability efforts.

### 4b. Water Consumption

We monitor our water use on a monthly basis. We aim to reduce our consumption by 1% by the end of 2025 and do the following towards achieving this:

- Using water displacement techniques in our toilet cisterns to reduce the amount of water per flush
- Having aerators on all taps to reduce water flow
- Running the dishwasher only when full and on an 'eco' setting, with a sign outlining this
- Using an extra plastic sink basin to catch water when rinsing kitchen items and reusing it for minor cleaning tasks

As part of our commitment we ask our members to engage in water saving measures when working with us.



#### 4c. Waste Production

Our top priority is to prevent waste from arising in the first place—particularly by being mindful of what comes on-site, such as unnecessary packaging. We remain firmly committed to minimising our overall environmental impact. For waste that cannot be prevented, we have a comprehensive system in place to responsibly manage recycling, general waste, and compost, ensuring materials are sorted and processed with sustainability in mind.

The total office waste production is measured and recorded with every billing cycle.

We aim to reduce our waste production by:

- Buying only what we really need and buying in bulk where possible
- Avoiding single-use plastic (for example water bottles)
- Bringing home-cooked lunch where possible to avoid plastic and other packaging
- Recycling paper and plastic and using a brown food composting bin
- Keeping additional lunch boxes in the office which staff can bring to the local deli to prevent single-use packaging
- Encouraging staff to use keep cups when buying coffee on route to work
- Avoiding using paper and other stationery by running a digital office

As part of our commitment, we ask our members to engage in waste reduction measures when working with us.

#### 4d. Food Waste Production

We always aim to avoid food waste where possible. As a proud supporting member of the EPA Food Waste Charter:

- We urge any food sector businesses and organisations we engage with to sign the Food Waste Charter and join the collective action to reduce food waste through our annual food waste webinar, waste management workshop and waste training programme
- We ensure there are opportunities to support food waste prevention and the Food Waste Charter in our programmes and initiatives such as our annual food waste webinar, waste management workshop and waste training programme
- We communicate on national activities, and our organisation's own Food Waste Charter supporting activities, to our stakeholders, customers and client organisations through our annual food waste webinar, waste management workshop and waste training programme
- We support national Food Waste Charter events, and the Stop Food Waste national consumer-facing campaign, and promote these through our internal and customer communication channels such as on our social media channels and our STN newsletter
- We provide annual updates to the EPA (as lead delivery body for the Food Waste Charter) on our activities that have supported the implementation of the Food Waste Charter

We aim to reduce our food waste production by:

- Buying only what we really need
- Bringing home-cooked lunch to avoid over-purchasing and to use up leftovers
- Informing all staff about perishable leftovers



- Carefully planning and managing catering quantities for meetings, conferences, or networking events based on expected attendance to avoid over-ordering
- Prioritising work with caterers who support sustainable practices, and, where possible, ensuring any surplus food is shared, composted, or responsibly disposed of to minimise waste

## 5. We Follow Our Home Office Policy

To manage our impacts while we are working in our respective home offices we encourage our team to:

- Sign up to a 100% renewable electricity provider (eg Airtricity and Energia)
- We substitute traditional incandescent light bulbs with LED lights once a bulb reaches the end of life.
- Some staff drive hybrid or electric vehicles, others use public transport or cycle to the office. We use the company Electric Vehicle (EV) where possible. (EV charger available at the office)
- Try to reduce the need for heating in the cooler months by layering up and using a hot water bottle and/or having a hot drink.
- We attempt to save water by not leaving taps running and using rain or grey water to water plants.
- Set up our work station in a room with significant natural light exposure.
- Switch laptops, screens and lights off, rather than leaving in standby mode, at the end of the day.
- Purchase Fair Trade/Rainforest Alliance certified and or plastic-free tea and coffee.
- We try to purchase products with minimal packaging and from local (Irish) suppliers where possible.
- We attempt to reduce our waste, reuse where possible and sort our waste into recycling, glass, food waste and general waste.
- When travelling to the office or to external meetings, we attempt to use public transport and carpooling where feasible.
- We further attempt to minimise the need to drive by holding meetings online where feasible.
- We upgrade equipment with the highest-energy rated equipment once it has reached end of life.
- Our digital office policy extends to home offices, which cuts out the need for paper, printers, physical filing and a wide range of office supplies.
- We reuse old notebooks and scrap paper to write notes if needed.

## 6. We Support Biodiversity

Since we are a business without physical land we support Irish biodiversity and nature conservation by being a member of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and promote it to our members.

Furthermore, together with Vagabond we planted 2,000 native Irish trees in February 2025 through during our office tree-planting day. A further tree-planting project will take place later this year in Mayo with our biodiversity partner [Trees on the Land](#).



.We also support biodiversity through our training programmes and annual All Ireland Pollinator Plan webinar.

As part of our commitment, we ask our members to engage in biodiversity conservation activities when working with us. We encourage our members to adopt site-appropriate conservation guidelines when viewing marine megafauna, bird watching, visiting bogs, peatlands, wetlands or other natural sites.

## 7. We Adhere To Ethical Purchasing Principles

In general, we attempt to keep our purchasing needs to a minimum and aim to reduce our consumption by buying only what we really need. We follow the key principles of:

- Sourcing products and services locally where possible
- Giving preference to third-party certified products.
- Purchasing products with less environmental impact in their manufacture, use and disposal, and giving preference to responsible products with less packaging.

As part of our commitment, we ask our members to engage in ethical purchasing practices when working with us.

## 8. We Engage In Carbon Management

Through our efforts to reduce the resource consumption associated with the operation of Sustainable Tourism Network, we work on reducing our carbon footprint. Up until 2025, our emissions have been included in the carbon calculation at our HQ with our sister company Vagabond. We aim to calculate our own carbon footprint for 2025 with the Climate Toolkit 4 Business calculator.

We aim to offset the emissions that we are not able to reduce in 2025 with certified, ICROA-accredited renewable energy projects that are part of the Gold Standard and Verified Carbon Standard programmes.

As part of our commitment, we ask our members to engage in carbon management when working with us.

## 9. We Limit The Environmental Impact Of Our Meetings And Events

Meetings and events can have a significant impact on the environment. We therefore aim at limiting the negative impact by:

- Understanding the importance of in-person meetings, but giving preference to online meetings where possible.
- For online sessions we encourage participants to turn off their cameras during presentations and to switch it on for Q&A sessions to limit the energy required to operate video conferencing calls.



For physical meetings and events we:

- Give preference to certified venues where available and only work with venues that have sustainability policies and accessibility practices in place.
- Run paperless marketing campaigns.
- Aim to choose that a venue is reachable by public transport and encourage car sharing where car use cannot be avoided.
- If we do need to travel, we use public transport or our company electric vehicle where possible.
- Request vegetarian catering options as default (opt-in for meat).
- Manage the quantity of catering ordered so as to avoid food waste and either encourage attendees to take a goodie bag if there is excess food or ensure the food is given away.
- Apply a zero single-use-plastic policy during events.
- Discourage any goodie bags and marketing products unless digital or edible.

## 10. We Market Our Sustainability Efforts In A Responsible Manner

We know that it is important to communicate our efforts in an honest way. We are aware of the risk of greenwashing and are committed to marketing our organisation in an ethical and responsible way. We create accurate marketing that leads to realistic expectations. In our efforts to reduce paper waste, we are using digital materials and channels for our marketing campaigns.

As part of our commitment, we ask our members to engage in responsible sustainability marketing when working with us.

## 11. We Engage With Our Stakeholders

At our 2025 conference, we proudly emphasised the crucial role of collaboration in advancing a more sustainable tourism industry. This initiative underscores our belief that collective action is key to driving meaningful change in sustainability practices within the industry.

We also engage with our stakeholders by:

- Speaking at events on the topic of sustainable tourism
- Encouraging the adoption of sustainable tourism measures
- Running public and member workshops as well as webinars on topics around sustainable tourism
- Joining forces by running webinars with affiliate members whose messages align with our own (SEAI, Biodiversity Ireland, Irish Water etc).
- Sending customer satisfaction surveys after each workshop session.
- Developing training content for European Tourism SMEs through the I-STARS project.
- Collaborating with umbrella organisations, such as the ITOA



## 12. Social Responsibility & Community Building

We believe that collaboration and community building are the most effective ways to spread knowledge about sustainability. We support our community by:

- Running an annual conference
- Offering heavily discounted student tickets
- Running regular free webinars
- Providing cost-effective training
- Curating sustainability resources
- Offering member networking events
- Facilitating networking events
- Running live peer to peer sessions with European Tourism SMEs as part EU projects.
- Participating in annual litter clean-ups.

In 2025, our support for the Wicklow Pride Community and the Wicklow Pride parade continued through our 'Friend of Wicklow Pride' sponsorship. This year's engagement also included sponsoring the Eco Hero Professional Awards at the Outsider.ie Awards.

As part of our commitment, we ask our members to take social responsibility when working with us.

## 13. Further Guiding Principles And Memberships

In addition to this sustainability policy, we further adhere to the following principles:

- Leave No Trace
- Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)
- Tourism Declares Climate Emergency
- All Ireland Pollinator Plan

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