



# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM NETWORK

## SUSTAINABILITY POLICY 2024

*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 and support them in their transformation to meet our global goals.

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. We also want to bring these businesses together to form a forward-thinking community of like-minded organisations through collaboration, networking and training events.

### 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. 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 transformation from Ecotourism Ireland to Sustainable Travel Ireland and now to the Sustainable Tourism Network, we've experienced significant growth. This expansion has allowed us to serve a broader spectrum of the tourism community.

Our team thereby 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:

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

We have been engaged in energy reduction practices for many years. However, we still aim to reduce our energy use by 1% by the end of 2024.

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 2025. and do the following to reduce our consumption:

- Using an extra plastic sink basin to catch water when rinsing kitchen items and reusing it for minor cleaning tasks.
- Running the dishwasher only when full and on an 'eco' setting.
- Having aerators on all taps to reduce water flow.
- Using dual flush in bathrooms as needed.
- We use water displacement techniques in our toilet cisterns to reduce the amount of water per flush.

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



#### 4c. Waste Production

We always aim to avoid waste where possible. Where waste cannot be prevented we have a recycling programme in place in our office base, where we aim to reduce, reuse, sort and recycle as much material as we can.

We sort waste into the following categories:

- General waste
- Compost
- Recyclable
- The total office waste production is measured and recorded with every pick up, which is about every two months.

We thereby aim to reduce our waste production by:

- Buying only what we really need.
- Bringing home-cooked lunch where possible to avoid plastic packaging.
- Recycling paper and plastic, and using a brown food composting bin.
- Avoiding single-use plastic (for example water bottles).
- Avoiding paper use by running a digital office.
- We keep additional lunch boxes in the office which staff can bring to the local deli to prevent single-use packaging.

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:

- 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
- Using a brown food composting bin
- Informing all staff about perishable leftovers
- Hosting an annual food waste webinar for members of our network and everyone else



## 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 energy provider (eg Airtricity and Energia).
- Set up our work station in a room with significant natural light exposure.
- 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, using dual-flush toilets and using rain or grey water to water plants.
- 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.
- Some staff drive hybrid vehicles and cycle and we use the company Electric Vehicle (EV) where possible. (EV charger available at the office)
- We substitute traditional incandescent light bulbs with LED lights once a bulb reaches the end of life.
- We upgrade equipment with the highest-energy rated equipment once it has reached end of life.
- We run paperless home offices without printers.
- 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 Vagabondwe planted 400 native Irish trees in February 2024 through our biodiversity partner [Trees on the Land](#).

We also encourage our members to adopt the relevant minimal impact Codes of Leave No Trace, marine megafauna viewing, bird watching, and for visiting bogs, peatlands and wetlands among others.

As part of our commitment, we ask our members to engage in biodiversity conservation activities when working with us.



## 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 thereby follow the key principles of:

- Sourcing products and services locally where possible and 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.
- Reduce, reuse and recycle packaging.
- Ensure that all suppliers adhere to safe and ethical working practices.
- 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.

We calculate our carbon footprint with the [climate toolkit for business calculator](#) and subsequently receive consultancy from [Ecollective](#) on how to reduce our footprint further.

We offset the emissions that we are not able to reduce with a 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.
- Ensure that the 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 the our company electric vehicle where possible.
- Request vegetarian catering options as default (opt-in for meat).
- Manage 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.
- Avoid 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 2024 conference, we proudly launched our network, emphasising 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 organisations whose messages align with our own (like 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 on sustainability programmes

## 12. Social Responsibility & Community Building

We believe that collaboration and community building are the most effective ways to spread knowledge about sustainability. We thereby 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.
- In 2024 we are also delighted to support the Wicklow Pride Community through our 'Friend of Wicklow Pride' sponsorship.
- We participate in annual litter clean-ups.



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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