



**Sustainability Policy**

<b>Procedure Title</b>	<b>Sustainability Policy</b>
<b>Procedure Ref:</b>	OP17
<b>Lead Area</b>	Operations (OPS)
<b>Other related</b>	Operations
<b>Approval date:</b>	February 11th 2026
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<b>No</b>	<b>POLICY:</b>
	<b>Note</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Purpose</li><li>2. Scope</li><li>3. References</li><li>4. Conclusion</li></ol>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>PURPOSE</b></p> <p><b>Abbey Theatre Sustainability Policy</b></p> <p><i>As Ireland's National Theatre, the Abbey Theatre is committed to environmental sustainability and to leading by example in the cultural sector. This Sustainability Policy lays out how we will reduce our carbon footprint and improve sustainability across all areas of our operations from energy use and waste management to production practices and community engagement.</i></p> <p>It aligns with national and international climate goals (including Ireland's target of a 51% greenhouse gas</p>

reduction by 2030 and the broader aim of net-zero emissions by 2050), as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (notably SDG 13: Climate Action and SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production).

The policy is designed to be clear, actionable, and publicly accessible, so that staff, artists, audiences and partners can understand our commitments and join us in achieving them. [\[cso.ie\]](http://cso.ie) [\[their.ie\]](http://their.ie)

We have developed this policy with reference to best practices in the arts and cultural sector. Our ambition is guided by the international Theatre Green Book standards for sustainable theatre production, buildings, and operations.

We participate in the Green Arts Initiative in Ireland for shared learning and benchmarking. Peer institutions like the UK’s National Theatre have demonstrated leadership by setting ambitious targets (e.g. achieving net-zero carbon by 2030) and adopting industry-wide frameworks.

Similarly, Irish theatres such as the Theatre Royal (Waterford) have established “Green Teams” and annual reviews to drive continuous improvement. Drawing on these examples, the Abbey’s Sustainability Policy is rooted in proven strategies and tailored to our unique context as a historic theatre

2030 Emissions Reduction Target 51%	Solar Panels Installed 92
Cut in GHG emissions by 2030 (aligned with Ireland’s Public Sector Climate Action Mandate)	Photovoltaic panels on Abbey Theatre’s roof, generating ~1 months’ worth of power annually
Single-Use Plastic Cups 0	Recycled Paper Usage 100%
Eliminated disposable plastic glasses & straws at theatre bars (replaced with biodegradable options)	All office and promotional paper is recycled and FSC-certified, minimizing virgin paper use

**Core Policy Objectives**

In implementing this Sustainability Policy, the Abbey Theatre’s core objectives are to:

- **Reduce Carbon Emissions and Energy Use:** Achieve significant cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in line with Ireland’s climate targets (51% reduction by 2030), through improved energy efficiency and adoption of renewables. Ultimately, we aim to reach net-zero carbon emissions by mid-century, consistent with national policy and the Paris Agreement.
- **Minimise Waste and Promote a Circular Economy:** Greatly reduce waste sent to landfill by cutting overall waste generation and maximising reuse and recycling. We strive to embed the principles of “reduce, reuse, recycle” in all activities – from productions to office operations – and to move toward a circular model where theatre sets, props, and materials get a second life instead of becoming waste

- **Sustainable Production Practices:** Integrate sustainability into the art of theatre-making. This means using environmentally responsible design and production methods – such as reusing set pieces, eco-friendly materials, and low-energy technologies – without compromising artistic quality. We will follow guidelines like the *Theatre Green Book* to make our productions, stages, costumes, and props as sustainable as possible
- **Engage and Educate Stakeholders:** Foster a culture of sustainability among staff, artists, and audiences. Every employee and visiting artist has a role in implementing this policy day-to-day, and our audiences should see and feel our commitment. We will provide training, resources, and clear communication so that sustainable choices are the easy and expected norm throughout our organization. We also plan to inspire audience members with our actions and invite them to participate (for example, through greener travel choices or recycling programmes at our venue).
- **Align with Broader Initiatives and Transparency:** Ensure our efforts contribute to broader environmental initiatives and that we remain accountable. We will align our targets with national strategies (like the government’s Climate Action Plan) and international frameworks (UN SDGs). Progress will be measured and reported openly – for instance, by tracking our carbon footprint annually and publishing results – to maintain transparency and drive continuous improvement.

These objectives are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The table below outlines the key policy areas covered by the Abbey Theatre Sustainability Policy, the specific objectives within each area, and example commitments or actions we are undertaking:

Policy Area	Objectives (What we aim to achieve)	Example Commitments & Actions (How we’ll do it)
Energy & Carbon Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cut energy usage and associated carbon emissions in line with climate targets (e.g. halve emissions by 2030)</li> <li>- Transition to clean energy sources and improve energy efficiency across theatre facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Efficiency Upgrades:</b> Conduct regular energy audits and implement improvements (e.g. upgraded to LED lighting in stages, auditoriums, and offices).</li> <li>- <b>Optimize HVAC systems</b> and install smart controls to reduce consumption.</li> <li>- <b>Renewable Energy:</b> Invest in on-site renewables (already 92 solar panels on our roof, providing 8% of annual electricity and procure 100% green electricity from the grid).</li> <li>- <b>Carbon Tracking:</b> Measure our carbon footprint yearly and benchmark against the 51% reduction pathway.</li> <li>- Use a “carbon budget” for productions to manage and mitigate emissions.</li> <li>- <b>Low-Carbon Travel:</b> Encourage low-carbon transport for work: promote public transport, cycling (bike storage for staff), and car-pooling; limit air travel and offset necessary emissions.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Waste Reduction &amp; Resource Use</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimise waste generation (aim for significant waste reduction per show and office operations).</li> <li>- Maximise reuse, recycling, and composting so that the majority of our waste is diverted from landfill.</li> <li>- Conserve water and other natural resources in our facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Eliminate Single-Use Plastics:</b> Removed disposable plastic cups and straws from theatre bars (switched to compostable or reusable alternatives. Provide water bottle refill stations to discourage plastic bottle use.</li> <li>- <b>Recycling &amp; Composting:</b> Provide clearly labelled recycling bins front-of-house and back-of-house for paper, cardboard, glass, metals, etc., and compost bins for organic waste (e.g. café food scraps) Partner with waste contractors to ensure at least 65% recycling rate (matching or exceeding local targets).</li> <li>- <b>Paper Use:</b> “Go digital” policy for communications and marketing – use e-tickets and QR codes instead of printed tickets and print materials only on demand All paper used (tickets, programs, office paper) is 100% recycled or FSC-certified.</li> <li>- <b>Water Conservation:</b> Install water-efficient fixtures (low-flow taps, toilets) and fix leaks promptly. Explore rainwater harvesting in any building redevelopment to use for non-potable needs.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Sustainable Production Practices (Sets, Costumes, &amp; Procurement)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Embed sustainability into production design and execution.</li> <li>- Reduce waste and carbon in set construction, props, costumes, lighting, and sound without compromising artistry.</li> <li>- Prefer environmentally friendly materials and suppliers (sustainable procurement).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Green Set Design:</b> Follow the <i>Theatre Green Book</i> guidelines for productions, aiming for at least the “Basic” sustainability standard on all shows. This involves designing sets for disassembly and reuse, and ensuring at least 50% of set materials are reused or recycled from previous productions (and similarly, repurposing materials after a show ends).</li> <li>- <b>Eco-Friendly Materials:</b> Use timber from sustainable sources (FSC-certified wood), low-VOC paints, and avoid harmful chemicals. For example, our Costume Department stopped using chemical sprays for pest control and now uses natural alternatives (cloves, essential oils, etc.) Costumes and props are stored or rented out for reuse in future shows rather than discarded.</li> <li>- <b>Sustainable Procurement:</b> Include sustainability criteria when purchasing goods and services. We prioritize local and low-impact options – e.g. sourcing café food and coffee from suppliers with strong green credentials (like a local roastery using sustainable practices). We avoid single-use items in productions and favour reusable set pieces and electronics with lower energy use.</li> <li>- <b>Energy-Efficient Tech:</b> Continue replacing older stage lighting and equipment with energy-efficient LED lighting and modern sound systems that draw less power. This not only cuts energy use but also reduces heat (lowering cooling needs).</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Audience &amp; Community Engagement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage audiences in our sustainability journey and to participate in our efforts – for instance, offering make attending the Abbey a greener experience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Green Audience Experience:</b> Encourage patrons to participate in our efforts – for instance, offering discounts or incentives for those who use public transport or bicycles to attend shows. Provide</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leverage our public platform to promote environmental awareness and behaviour change.</li> <li>- Connect with the community and partners on sustainability initiatives.</li> </ul>	<p>information on our website about reaching the theatre sustainably (bus routes, bike parking, etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Communication &amp; Transparency:</b> Display information in our lobby and programs about our sustainability actions (e.g. signage showing that our programs are printed on recycled paper, or updates on energy saved by our solar panels). This educates audiences about what we're doing and why, hopefully inspiring them as well.</li> <li>- <b>Programming and Outreach:</b> Whenever appropriate, support productions or host talk-back sessions that discuss climate and sustainability themes, linking the art on stage with real-world action. Collaborate with local environmental organizations or campaigns – for example, participate in citywide events like Earth Hour, or lend our venue for community sustainability workshops.</li> <li>- <b>Feedback and Inclusion:</b> Invite audience feedback and ideas on our sustainability practices (e.g. via surveys or suggestion boxes) to ensure our initiatives align with public expectations and to crowdsource new ideas.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Staff &amp; Artist Involvement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultivate a sustainability-first culture among all employees and artists working with the Abbey.</li> <li>- Clearly define responsibilities and provide training so that everyone can contribute to our goals.</li> <li>- Recognize and reward sustainable practices internally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Green Team &amp; Leadership:</b> Establish a cross-departmental Green Team (already in place) with staff representatives from production, facilities, administration, etc., to champion initiatives and monitor progress. This team meets regularly and reports to senior management on sustainability metrics and ideas. We also designate a senior manager as Sustainability Lead to ensure top-level support</li> <li>- <b>Training &amp; Awareness:</b> Provide training for staff and onboarding for new team members about our sustainability policy – e.g. workshops on carbon literacy (as the UK National Theatre has done, training 38% of staff in carbon awareness), and briefings for production crews on sustainable techniques. Share tips and progress updates in internal newsletters to keep awareness high.</li> <li>- <b>Sustainable Work Practices:</b> Implement daily practices such as default double-sided printing, energy-saving office policies (computers off at night, etc.), and encourage creative departments to integrate reuse (e.g. reusing set pieces in design). Artists and crews engaged for productions are asked to follow our guidelines (for instance, use our refillable water stations instead of disposable bottles, as outlined in our production contracts)</li> <li>- <b>Recognition:</b> Incorporate sustainability into performance appraisals or award schemes – e.g. an</li> </ul>

			<p>annual “<i>Green Champion</i>” award for staff or departments that make outstanding contributions to our sustainability goals. Celebrate successes (like hitting a recycling target or designing an exceptionally green production) to reinforce positive behaviour.</p>
	<p><b>Governance &amp; Reporting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrate sustainability into organizational strategy and decision-making.</li> <li>- Ensure compliance with relevant environmental regulations and strive to exceed them.</li> <li>- Monitor progress and publicly report on sustainability performance for transparency and accountability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic Commitment: Make sustainability a core value in our strategic plan (our 2025–2030 strategy explicitly makes “environmental sustainability central to everything we do. Major decisions – from capital projects to season programming – are evaluated for environmental impact alongside artistic and financial considerations.</li> <li>- Compliance and Beyond: Comply with all environmental laws and guidelines (waste disposal, energy use, etc.), but also voluntarily adopt higher standards where possible. For example, we aim to exceed basic regulatory requirements on energy efficiency and waste reduction (mirroring the approach of our peers, e.g. Theatre Royal’s policy to not just meet but surpass legal requirements). We will stay updated on evolving standards (like any future theatre sustainability certification) and update this policy accordingly.</li> <li>- Monitoring &amp; Reporting: Use KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) for each policy area (energy kWh, tons CO<sub>2</sub>, recycling rate, water use, etc.) and track them quarterly. Provide an annual public report on our website detailing our sustainability progress, challenges, and next steps. This report will show trends over time and measure results against the goals set out (e.g. progress toward the 2030 emissions target).</li> <li>- External Engagement: Engage with external frameworks and initiatives: we will share data with bodies like the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) as part of our Climate Action Roadmap <a href="https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/sustainability-actions/">https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/sustainability-actions/</a>, and continue partnering in sector programs (e.g. Theatre Forum’s Green Arts Initiative) for collective improvement . We also commit to reviewing this policy at least every two years (next formal review by February 2028, ensuring it remains aligned with best practices and our evolving strategic goals.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Note:</b> Each policy area above is interconnected. For instance, investing in energy efficiency (Energy &amp; Carbon) reduces costs that can be redirected to further sustainability or artistic efforts, and engaging our staff and audience (Culture &amp; Engagement) is essential to achieve the technical goals in energy, waste, and production. By addressing sustainability holistically, the Abbey Theatre can reduce its environmental impact while also enhancing its role as a socially responsible cultural institution.</p>		

2.	SCOPE
3.	<p><b>REFERENCES</b></p> <p><b>Best Practices and Frameworks in the Cultural Sector.</b></p> <p>In formulating this policy, the Abbey Theatre considered successful approaches from other cultural institutions and adhered to widely recognized sustainability frameworks:</p> <p>Theatre Green Book: We drew on the <i>Theatre Green Book</i> standards – an industry-developed guide for sustainable theatre. The Theatre Green Book provides checklists and benchmarks for making productions more eco-friendly (e.g. reuse targets for sets), for running theatre buildings efficiently, and for overall operations. The National Theatre (UK) has already integrated the Theatre Green Book, achieving its “Basic” sustainability standard across productions, buildings, and operations since 2024. Like them, we aim to progressively meet these standards (and eventually reach advanced levels, moving toward a “Net Zero” theatre). Additionally, an Irish adaptation of the Theatre Green Book has been developed via the Green Arts Initiative in Ireland, ensuring relevance to local conditions – we intend to use this as a key reference in our production planning. <a href="#">[nationaltheatre.org.uk]</a> <a href="#">[performingartsforum.ie]</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Green Arts Initiative (Ireland) &amp; Julie’s Bicycle:</b> The Abbey Theatre actively participates in Theatre Forum’s Green Arts Initiative in Ireland. This network (run in partnership with Creative Carbon Scotland) supports arts organizations with training, resources, and carbon tracking tools. By being part of this community, we benefit from shared learnings and can benchmark our performance against peers. (The Theatre Royal’s <i>Green Arts Policy</i>, for example, shows similar focus areas and illustrates the value of a sector-wide approach.) We also look to guidance from organizations like Julie’s Bicycle in the UK, which has pioneered arts-specific sustainability frameworks and certification (many UK theatres use Julie’s Bicycle’s Creative Green tools to measure their carbon emissions and improve sustainability). These external supports and standards help ensure our policy aligns with what’s globally recognized as best practice for cultural institutions. <a href="#">[abbeytheatre.ie]</a> <a href="#">[performingartsforum.ie]</a></li> <li>• <b>National and Local Frameworks:</b> Our commitments are designed to complement Ireland’s national climate strategies and comply with public sector mandates. The Irish government’s Climate Action Plan and the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate call for leadership from public institutions in cutting emissions and energy use. As a partially state-funded organization, we embrace this leadership role. For example, our 2030 emissions reduction goal is directly in line with national policy (51% reduction), and our energy management efforts contribute to the public sector target of 50% improved energy efficiency by 2030. Locally, we coordinate with Dublin City sustainability programs (like recycling initiatives and sustainable transport promotions) to ensure our actions amplify community efforts. <a href="#">[cso.ie]</a></li> <li>• <b>UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):</b> The broad vision of our Sustainability Policy is informed by the UN SDGs – a universal blueprint for sustainable development. The Abbey Theatre particularly advances SDG 13 (Climate Action) through our emissions reductions and climate education efforts, and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by changing how we design productions and manage resources. We recognize, as the Lir Academy has articulated, that environmental sustainability intersects with social sustainability (equity, inclusion). In our role as an employer and cultural convenor, we aim to address sustainability in</li> </ul>

	<p>an inclusive way, ensuring that our green initiatives also foster a safe, equitable environment (for example, our volunteer Green Team is open to all staff and encourages diverse participation, and we consider accessibility and inclusion when implementing changes like building retrofits or new technologies).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Examples from Peer Institutions:</b> We have looked at policies from other theatres and cultural venues to guide the structure and ambition of our own. For instance, the National Theatre (London) not only set a net-zero 2030 goal but also committed to publicly report progress annually and integrate sustainability into storytelling. This reinforced our decision to include strong monitoring and transparency in our policy. The Abbey Theatre has also been recognised for some of our early sustainability work – for example, winning a Renewable Energy Project of the Year award in 2024 for our solar panel initiative – and we intend to build on this momentum. By learning from others and sharing our own successes and setbacks, we will remain at the forefront of sustainable practice in the arts.</li> </ul>
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>CONCLUSION</b></p> <p>The Abbey Theatre’s Sustainability Policy is both a declaration of our values and a roadmap for action. It translates our recognition of the climate crisis and our responsibility as a cultural leader into concrete objectives and measures. This policy will be updated as needed to remain current with technological advances and evolving standards – sustainability is a journey of continuous improvement. We will communicate updates openly, and we welcome the input of our staff, artists, audiences, and partners in refining our approach.</p> <p>By implementing this policy, the Abbey Theatre commits to making environmental sustainability a central part of everything we do. We believe this commitment will not only reduce our environmental impact but also enhance the creative and community value of our theatre. A sustainable Abbey Theatre is one that can continue to inspire and entertain generations to come, in a way that respects our planet and its people.</p> <p>Together, through collective effort and innovation, we will ensure that the Abbey Theatre’s storied stage is part of a greener, more sustainable future.</p>