

Climate Action Policy

Climate change is the defining challenge of our time, driving the loss of habitats and biodiversity, both globally and locally. In Ireland, we are already experiencing the results of climate change through flooding, extreme weather, and rising sea levels,

At Backstage Theatre, we recognise the role we play in this environmental emergency through the work we present and create, the materials we use, and the travel implications for audiences, staff and artists touring to our venue. We have already undertaken several positive measures in meeting climate action progress.

However, we believe that our theatre can be part of the drive to address this challenge, by examining every part of our business to make change. We believe these changes will happen through changing the way we work and by engaging with the public creatively to provoke a change in thinking and attitudes.

We are committed to making the changes necessary to reduce the carbon impact of the theatre and in line with the Irish Governments 2021 Climate Act and Action Plan, which commits Ireland to 51% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The scale of the changes required means we will scrutinize every part of the way we operate with the full commitment of the theatre's staff and board.

Our commitments are:

- To embed environmental sustainability at the heart of the theatre's practice.
- To set year-on-year carbon reduction targets within our environmental action plan, subject to available funding and resources.
- To report on our progress annually.
- Where necessary, -seek expert advice and guidance and to share our experience and learn from others within the wider sector.

Our areas of focus are:

Energy - We are working to improve the efficiency of our 1995 building to reduce energy usage by making significant improvements within the fabric of the building, upgrading our lighting and equipment as well as monitoring and quantifying our energy usage.

Water and Waste Management – We are committed to improving our water and waste management and to significantly reducing the waste that is produced by the theatre by examining the material we use, our work practices and the products we sell and, where necessary, by introducing upgrades to existing facilities.

Travel & Transport – We will address the impact of transport and travel on Backstage Theatre's carbon footprint and work to reduce the impact of travel to the theatre, by staff, artists and audiences.

People - We will empower our staff and artists to examine their own practices and decision making, with ideas for change that will be embraced by the organisation. Our goal is to embody environmental action that will provoke positive change, engage with our community creatively, enabling audiences on the urgent transition to a climate resilient and carbon neutral society.

Monitoring and reporting - We are committed to quantifying and monitoring our progress through the actions we set out and the data we collect. Our Environmental Policy will be supported by an Environmental Action Plan and both will be reviewed on an annual basis by our Board and updated as necessary.

Climate Action Plan

In 2016 we began our journey towards a more sustainable and environmentally friendly organisation with an SEAI funded initiative to insulate the auditorium and upgrade heating systems. We have continued to take action since with the introduction of LED and sensor lighting in the building.

We will build on this by undertaking an annual energy audit to identify the current areas of waste and inefficiency and actions to address this issues. This will inform our priorities and areas of focus, and our ongoing review process.

We will continue to develop our sustainability processes and policies to set baselines, targets and key performance indicators so we can continue to minimise our carbon footprint.

We will appoint a Green Champion whose role will be to lead the development and extension of our climate action policy and plan, engaging with staff, audience, artists and board to develop and promote long and short-term initiatives.

We will work collaboratively with our principal funding agencies (Longford County Council and the Arts Council) in progressing our climate action plan.

Key Action Areas

Energy

In 2016 as part of an SEAI funded project we undertook the following energy saving measures:

- Fully insulated the auditorium
- Upgraded the heating system with a new boiler and radiators.

In 2023, as part of a project funded under strand A of the Department of Arts Cultural Capital Scheme we undertook the following:

- Replaced all of the Front of House lighting with LED lights
- Replaced some of the stage lighting with LED stage lights.
- Installed sensor lighting in hallways and toilet areas.

We use a heating timer to control the energy use throughout the building

All members of the staff team are very conscious of minimising usage and behaviours have changed to support this (turning off lights and machinery when not in use).

Over the coming years we aim to do the following:

- Invest in further and additional LED stage lighting and upgrade our power and data infrastructure and distribution to facilitate ease of use in an eventual full conversion to LED.
- Replace all equipment with A-rated appliances
- Improve the insulation and draft proofing of the building by draft proofing around doors and replacing door glass with double glazing.
- Identify other energy saving measures which would reduce our carbon footprint further
- Subject to agreement, we will work with our landlord Slashers GAA to investigate funding opportunities to enable us to install solar panels to further minimise our use of fossil fuels.

Water and Waste Management

As part of our Waste Management policies, we have introduced the following measures to reduce the amount of overall waste we create:

- We share documents electronically, i.e. issue contracts, distribute meeting minutes and wage slips via email
- We reduce the amount of paper usage by using scrap paper for note taking and printing both sides.
- We use a digital scanner to aid the check in of tickets and send reminder emails with a link to a QR code for their ticket to encourage customers to avoid printing tickets
- We use QR codes for show programmes where possible
- We recycle all plastic and aluminium cans used and use paper straws only,

We will aim to expand on this in the coming years with the following measures:

- Eliminate the use of plastics (e.g. replace plastic with glass bottles in the bar, use recyclable/washable plastic glasses)
- Encourage the use of Keep Cups and Bottles within the staff team and by visitors
- Introduce a water fountain in the foyer and backstage areas
- Where necessary, invest in plumbing fixtures to reduce the amount of water wasted by leaking taps etc
- Compost all organic waste
- Work with incoming companies, inviting them to get involved in our waste reduction strategies, in particular looking at issues such the minimising of printed publicity material.

Travel & Transport

Our first action will be to gather information to inform and support how our customers, staff and artists can minimise their carbon footprint. We will survey our audience to gain an insight into the ways in which they travel to visit us, how far they travel, and with whom they travel. We will also gather in-depth information from our staff and visiting artists, which will help us to identify ways in which the impacts of travel can be mitigated. We will communicate directly to all our stakeholders on the merits of carbon footprint reduction and means of how this can be achieved.

In our efforts to begin our journey to reducing our carbon footprint, we have implemented the following:

- Remote working/hybrid option for some staff members
- Virtual online meetings facilitated through Teams, Zoom and Google

At a minimum, we will aim to:

- Promote car-pooling initiatives for patrons
- Secure bike parking facilities near our entrance for staff and visitors
- Subject to agreement with our landlord Slashers GAA Club, we will explore the possibility of installing electric car charging points in the carpark

Bio-Diversity

- We have transformed our gallery / front of house area into a green house space
- We work with the GAA club to keep the grounds as free of litter as possible
- We minimise any use of chemicals in the building
- We host shows and talks on the theme of biodiversity/sustainability