

**ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

1.0 Introduction

The role of this environmental policy is to ensure environmental protection issues are addressed consistently and efficiently over the long term by EastSide Partnership (ESP). It is intended as a guide to help the company to manage their environmental impact and activities in a systematic and considered way.

The policy aims to build environmental awareness into all activities, both external and internal, with attention paid to energy conservation, green purchasing, supporting small and local businesses whilst monitoring and reporting. It states the organisation’s overall environmental aims and commitment to continuous improvement.

**1.1 Overall Aim**

The overall aim of the environmental policy is to bring together economic, social and environmental goals to create an environment where these interests can co-exist. Success is not measured by imposing one agenda over another, but by finding solutions that integrate many different needs and concerns. The Climate Crisis makes it imperative that we play our part in lowering our environmental footprint and its impact – we believe this is also in the interests of ensuring our company is run cost effectively and that our commitment to regeneration includes a clean, green agenda.

Assessment of environmental impacts of current projects and new developments should be conducted. This will be followed by the design of effective interfaces between project delivery and nature conservation with enhanced environmental management systems and waste management. We hope the outcome will be a clean, safe environment that delivers projects of a high quality, embeds environmental sustainability into our work and doesn’t cost the planet.

**1.2 Objectives**

The objectives of this environmental policy are as follows:

* Review the environmental impacts of the activities carried out by ESP and its subsidiary companies
* Include environmental sustainability scoring when selecting third party suppliers/ providers where material (e.g. print)
* Devise an action plan that identifies programmes that will translate the policy’s objectives into specific quantified goals for improvement
* Monitor resource usage and identify areas/ opportunities to reduce our carbon footprint
* Appoint a green representative within the company to ensure environmental issues are at the forefront of our thoughts and processes
* Ensure staff have opportunities to contribute to the environmental action plan on an ongoing basis
* Review action plan annually to assess progress and make recommendations for ongoing improvement
* Operations Manager will review environmental policy every 3 years with final ratification by ESP Board

**2.0 Environmental Topics**

All organisations have an impact upon the environment at every stage of their work activities. The level of impact is affected by:

* **Inputs** (such as energy, water and purchase goods)
* **Operations** (such as distributing goods/services and transporting them)
* **Outputs** (such as finished products, services and waste)

The environmental policy considers the following topics and recommends how the inputs, operations and outputs can be altered in order to reduce the environmental impact:

Within the office and day to day running of the organisation:

* Energy consumption (2.1)
* Water consumption (2.2)
* Transport (2.3)
* Waste management (2.4)
* Resource and materials consumption (2.5)
* Built environment, economy and work (2.6)

**2.1 Energy Consumption (within the office spaces)**

The main sources of office energy within Avalon House, EastSide Visitor Centre and Carew Family Centre are gas (heating) and electricity (light and equipment).

Existing measures in place:

Lighting

* The office is arranged in such a way to maximise the use of natural light from windows
* We ensure that lights are turned off when they are not in use

Heating

* Thermostats have been fitted and are being used effectively
* The heating system is on a timer and the office is only heated during working hours
* Windows are insulated and draught-proofed

Equipment

* Equipment is turned off when not in use, if it is safe to do so
* All office equipment is maintained properly and serviced regularly

**Specific Actions**

* Research more energy efficient light bulbs which can save 50% on energy costs
* Checking energy efficiency ratings when buying new equipment
* Display signs to remind staff to turn off lights and close doors to enable the thermostat to work most effectively
* Try to understand our carbon footprint as a company and the impact our office use is having on the environment – next step is to look at how this can be reduced

**2.2 Water Consumption (within the office)**

Unnecessary use of water should be prevented as the earth’s water source is a global system and as the climate crisis is a worldwide issue we have to be much more globally conscious. The source of water for ESP in all offices is through the mains from the Water Authority. ESP’s main use of water is in the kitchens, washrooms and toilets. The amount of water consumed by ESP can be measured from metered water bills.

Existing measures in place:

* Improvements in water efficiency of equipment (e.g. rapid repair of leaks, dripping taps, and improved maintenance of plant and equipment)
* Good housekeeping measures such as turning off taps and reporting dripping taps
* We use a water boiler to save boiling the kettle constantly and if in the office in small numbers we do not switch the boiler on and instead ask other members of staff if they would like a beverage so we don’t boil the kettle twice, to save on water and energy.

**Specific Actions**

* Look into adding a brick or a hippo bag in the cistern of toilets to reduce water usage
* Ensure future sanitary fittings, taps, etc. are environmentally friendly (low-volume flush WCs, tap flow reduction, automatic shut off)

**2.3 Transport**

Transport has a number of harmful effects to the environment, causing air pollution, resource depletion, noise pollution and lowering the quality of life for residents close to busy roads. An efficient and reliable transport system is vital to all businesses, but it is recognised that the environmental effects of transport must be reduced. We all have a responsibility to reduce these impacts in their work and home life.

Existing measures in place:

* ESP staff are encouraged to cycle to work if possible and to use office/Belfast Bikes when commuting around east Belfast
* The majority of meetings take place within east Belfast and staff are encouraged to walk or cycle to these meetings
* Employees are encouraged to use the Glider or Metro bus to travel to meetings in the city centre. The Glider is a diesel-electric hybrid bus with LED lighting, making it the most sustainable public transport we currently have access to in east Belfast
* Travel budgets are limited and pay a single rate for mileage regardless of engine size
* Mileage claim form encourages car sharing as an extra 2p per mile for the 1st passenger and then 1p per passenger per mile is awarded
* We encourage environmentally-friendly commuting and travel (such as cycling and public transport) to our events
* We promote the environmental and health benefits of active travel to our stakeholders
* We encourage the use of Belfast Bikes that are stationed at C.S. Lewis Square and are linked to many stations across the city
* We have installed an indoor bike shed and racks to encourage cycling to work

**2.4 Waste Management**

Huge amounts of waste are produced and disposed of by companies each year causing harmful effects to the environment. Most waste in Northern Ireland is disposed of in landfill sites with subsequent problems of land pollution and negative visual effects. The use of single use plastics is also a serious problem in landfills and waterways with adverse effects on wildlife. Remote working measures have drastically reduced our reliance as a company on printing, with many of us not having a printer at home and learning to work from digital copies instead. Our financial processes have been streamlined significantly as we have moved away from written purchase orders attached to printed invoices and contracts, and issuing cheques, to a digital purchase order system, e-signed contracts and emailed invoices and p/order sign-off.

Existing measures in place -

*Reducing the amount of waste produced*

* Using both sides of paper for photocopying and printing
* Using email rather than posting or faxing documents
* Emailing agendas and minutes from board meetings rather than printing them (most of the Board of Directors bring their iPads, laptops or smart phones to read the material digitally which reduces the need for paper copies)
* Being mindful of the printing of promotional material and ensuring we are not over-ordering printed materials. Also ensuring that these materials are thoroughly proof-read to reduce the need for reprinting if errors occur
* Being strategic and future proofing branded merchandise so that t-shirts etc. can be worn by staff and volunteers year-on-year and there is no need to create more waste
* Using glasses instead of disposable cups for the water machine

*Re-using materials*

* Maintaining and repairing equipment and materials rather than throwing them away
* Using paper with printing on one side as scrap paper for notes

*Recycling materials*

* Shredding and recycling paper (where possible)
* Recycling cardboard, glass, plastic and tins
* Recycle materials that are not readily recyclable via Terracycle boxes

*Events and Activities*

* Encouraging more vegan and vegetarian options to lower our carbon footprint and lessen meat consumption

**Specific Actions**

* Encouraging staff to think before they print
* Investigating print options that are reusable e.g. pop-up banners, pvc outdoor banners to produce less waste
* Encourage the use of biodegradable or recyclable materials at events where food is available (ideally use proper plates, cups, glasses and cutlery where possible)
* Use glasses instead of disposable cups for the water machines in the office
* Selling or giving away old equipment rather than discarding it
* Borrowing / renting materials from local companies to encourage a sharing of resources rather than amassing materials that we only use infrequently

**2.5 Resource and Material Consumption**

All organisations need to purchase materials to carry out everyday activities. The collection of these materials and their subsequent disposal may directly contribute to the depletion of natural resources while their production may also damage the environment. It is therefore important to carefully consider the goods we purchase for activities.

**Specific Actions**

*Stationery*

* Buy envelopes without plastic windows (as these are hard to recycle
* Only purchase recycled or FSC Certified paper\*

\**FSC-certified paper is typically composed of virgin tree fibres but it can be just as eco-friendly as recycled paper. 'FSC' stands for Forest Stewardship Council, an organisation that works to promote the practice of sustainable forestry worldwide*

*Office Equipment*

* Doing double-sided copying and printing, and black and white where possible
* Ensuring equipment has standby function
* Ensuring all PCs and electronic equipment are energy efficient

*Other Materials*

* Using biodegradable and not chlorine or phosphate based cleaning materials
* Check type of cleaning products and buy environmentally friendly options
* Using washable tea towels rather than paper towels
* Work with small and local companies who can ensure that they use chemical free printing, organic cotton and Fair Wear Certified materials to purchase merchandise such as t-shirts and lanyards.

**2.6 Built and Natural Environment, Economy and Work**

Measures already in place:

*Built and Natural Environment*

* Staff endeavour not to litter or pollute the environment. ESP events and activities are not noisy or disturbing to others and we ensure all our event venues are left the way we found them, litter free, clean and tidy
* We encourage the use of the Connswater Community and Comber Greenways in everyday life

**Specific Actions**

* We will elect a green representative within the organisation
* Staff will endeavour to choose suppliers/ contractors and otherwise invest in organisations with proven environmental credentials, who are doing their best to limit resources and promote a healthy environment
* Staff will endeavour to buy locally produced goods and services

**3.0 Measurement**

A good plan must have clear achievable goals and timetables for achieving them, as well as a mechanism to measure progress towards those goals. While green planning sets objectives to be achieved over decades or even generations, it also recognises short-term goals that serve as indicators of general progress.

Ideally energy costs should be measured from bills; but measurement is harder for services whose effects on the environment are less direct -

* Measurement of quantities consumed e.g. electricity, water, paper
* Measurement of quantities produced e.g. printed material produced in a year and how many we were left with, in order to limit resource wastage in future
* Cost; how much is spent e.g. electricity bills, stationary, etc.
* Percentage of environmentally friendlier options used or produced: what proportion of consumption or production is environmentally friendlier in some way
* Measures taken to reduce the quantity of the effect directly such as double-sided photocopying and emailing rather than printing
* Proportion of trips by public transport, cycling or walking for staff and audiences
* Use of the resource tools available on the ‘Julie’s Bicycle’ website to see how our events and festivals measure up environmentally and if there is more we can be doing to lower our environmental footprint
* Efficiency improvements i.e. long-life light bulbs can be installed, or more efficient heating systems. Other improvements come from changes in working practices.

**4.0 Review**

The Action plan attached includes measurable goals, procedures and tools for implementation. The plan will be reviewed annually.

**5.0 Conclusion**

This report sets out the environmental objectives and required actions for ESP to become a more environmentally aware and pro-active company. It attempts to give guidelines to ensure all activities carried out are conducted in the least damaging way to the environment.

ESP will encourage others in the community, businesses and general public to reduce their negative impact on the environment through information, education, publicity and by setting an example of environmental good practice.

**6.0 References**

A guide to the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme for UK Local Government

A Manual for Environmental Management in Local government 1994

Evaluation of the built Environment for sustainability

Edited by P.S. Brandon, P.L. Lombardi and V. Bentivegna 1997

Environmental Awareness First Principles

Chartered Institute of Environmental health

Julie’s Bicycle

<https://www.juliesbicycle.com/reporting>

**7.0 2022/23 Action Plan**

EastSide Partnership wide actions

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| Aim | Actions | Deadline | KPI |
| Reduce energy consumption within the offices (Avalon House, EastSide Visitor Centre & Carew Family Centre) | Research more energy efficient light bulbs which can save 50% on energy costs | December 2022 | Price comparisons available and presented to Management Team for decision |
| Checking energy efficiency ratings when buying new equipment | Ongoing | All new equipment purchased has a high energy efficiency rating |
| Display signs to remind staff to turn off lights and close doors to enable the thermostat to work most effectively | July 2022 | Signs are posted around the offices |
| Try to understand our carbon footprint as a company | July 2022 | A report has been generated detailing our current carbon footprint |
| Reduce water consumption within the office | Look into adding a brick or a hippo bag in the cistern of toilets to reduce water usage  Ensure future sanitary fittings, taps, etc. are environmentally friendly (low-volume flush WCs, tap flow reduction, automatic shut off) | March 2023 | Water usage reduced due to measures introduced |
| Reducing waste | Encouraging staff to think before they print | July 2022 | Signs are posted at the printers and copier |
| Investigate pop-up banners with reusable out frames to produce less waste. | July 2022 | Costs are gathered in advance of ESAF22 and reusable frames used if possible |
| Use glasses instead of disposable cups for the water machines in the offices | July 2022 | Purchase of plastic cups is phased out in the office so glasses must be used |
| Buy refillable toner cartridges | December 2022 | Price comparisons available and presented to Management Team for decision |
| Resource and material consumption | Use biodegradable and not chlorine or phosphate cleaning materials – buy environmentally friendly options when possible  Use washable tea towels rather than paper towels | December 2022  Ongoing | Price comparisons available and presented to Management Team for decision  Staff rota for washing tea-towels is introduced |
| Built and natural environment | Staff will endeavour to choose suppliers and otherwise invest in organisations with proven environmental credentials  Staff will endeavour to buy locally produced goods and services | March 2023  Ongoing | The number of contracts awarded to ‘green’ suppliers has increased by 25%  Staff are shopping ‘local’ as a first option |