

West Cork Music Environmental and Sustainability Action Plan

West Cork Music is committed to reducing the impact of our work on the environment, while maintaining high standards of artistic excellence and festival atmosphere. The production of three international festivals in a remote location has always been a major draw to artists and audiences, but also creates problems for sustainability.

In 2021, WCM launched its Environmental and Sustainability Policy, with a view to identifying key areas to reduce waste and emissions, as well as the barriers and opportunities specific to West Cork Music, its location in rural Ireland, and its mission. These include geographic and infrastructure barriers, as well as striking the right balance between ensuring the comfort and well-being of artists and the artistic integrity of WCM activities, with cutting emissions and waste.

Actions So Far 2021-2025

1. In 2019, WCM's largest area of carbon emissions was travel for artists and volunteers to the Festivals.

Goal: Reduce Transport Emissions

Barriers:

- i. Ireland's isolation from the rail network in continental Europe, making airline travel a necessity
- ii. Bantry's remote location, infrequent public transport and absence of direct transport link to Cork Airport

Actions:

- i. Write into artist contracts to take direct flights to Ireland, rather than connecting flights
- ii. Further develop Artist Residency Policy – The Chamber Music Festival has a policy that overseas artists stay a minimum of five days, this reduces transport and waste emissions significantly. West Cork Music will explore how its other festivals and activities can develop similar practices for non-domestic artists.
- iii. Discontinue sending private taxis to Dublin to collect artists, but request them to take public transport to Cork
- iv. Promote new Local Link bus services in West Cork for audience members
- v. Include questions about travel habits in audience surveys to raise awareness

Results: Between 2019 and 2023 transport emissions for artists dropped from 47,500kg to 35,700kg of CO₂

2. Everyday habits – Are we asking the question: Is this sustainable/environmentally friendly?

Goal: Embed an awareness of sustainability throughout WCM, so that it is considered in everyday habits, decision making and programming, and becomes a central aspect of WCM brand.

Barriers:

- i. Limited choice available in an isolated rural town, e.g. catering and accommodation options

- ii. Conflicting or confusing data about what option might be better for the environment, e.g. if a piece of merchandise is produced in a sustainable way, but must be shipped from across the globe, is that better or worse for the environment

Actions:

- i. Increase in remote working and online meetings
- ii. Move to online board meetings rather than in-person
- iii. Consultation with staff about the Green Policy, to obtain their buy-in and raise awareness
- iv. Measuring carbon emission – office emissions, transport and accommodation emissions
- v. Change to green energy providers in the Box Office and CEO's office

3. Raising awareness in our sphere of influence about the climate change and environmental issues

Goal: Keep the Green Policy as a living document and the issue of sustainability alive

Actions:

- i. Audience survey questions about WCM Green Policy
- ii. Promote the Green Policy with signage, QR codes, WCM website and communications
- iii. Literary Festival programming writers discussing Green issues
- iv. Elevate important case studies in sustainable practices, e.g. Artists using slow travel rather than air travel

Action Plan 2025-2030

1. Audience travel emissions

Goal: Learn more about audience carbon footprint

Actions:

- i. Develop a methodology for measuring audience carbon footprint, especially for travel and accommodation. The audience survey is endeavouring to do this, and with feedback from audience, staff and surveyors we hope to find the best set of questions that can capture this data.
- ii. Develop an action plan for reducing audience carbon emissions
- iii. Set targets for audience carbon reduction

2. Embed sustainability and green habits

Goal: Increase awareness and encourage sustainable practices

Actions:

- i. Continue to publicise and promote the Green Policy in publicity materials, communications, surveys, online and at events
- ii. Promote good practices by showcasing case studies of sustainable practices by audience, artists and staff
- iii. Targeted communications with advice and tips for sustainable attendance at the Festival, and stay up to date on travel routes to Bantry.
- iv. Initiate discussions with accommodation providers about their sustainability policies
- v. Consult experts in the sector on best practices

3. Links with other arts organisations

Goal: Work to develop practices across the arts

Actions:

- i. Participate in workshops, seminars, webinars and other networking opportunities in these areas to share tools, ideas and solutions to sustainability barriers
- ii. Stay informed on developments in best practice, sustainable resourcing and purchasing

4. Waste reduction and management

Goal: Reduce waste of non-reusable materials, such as publicity materials and catering materials

Actions:

- i. Audit publicity materials, such as posters, brochures and programmes after the summer festivals, and reduce accordingly for the next year.
- ii. Where possible, use water filters and glasses rather than plastic or glass bottles for artists in green rooms
- iii. Move to ticketless events, where possible.

Written by Helen Dawson, September 2024

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