



Sustainability Policy

Wilderness Ireland

Introduction

Wilderness Ireland was conceived as a sustainable tourism business 10 years ago. Since that day our passion for delivering to our guests inspiring and memorable holiday experiences remains undiminished. Over the same period, our ambition to ensure our holidays deliver a wider positive impact has grown.

The necessity for all tourism businesses to ensure that the places we love are protected through responsible and sustainable travel has never been greater or more pressing. When done right, tourism can be an incredibly positive force for good, providing not only fantastic memories for travellers but vital benefits for host communities, economies and environments. In a world with a growing appreciation of health, the outdoors and community, we believe there are more people out there than ever before seeking travel experiences which not only enrich their lives but also the destinations they visit.

Partnering with [Travelife](#) represents another step in our sustainability journey and another expression of our commitment to go further in creating a positive impact through our business.

The sustainability policy outlined in this document covers three key areas: Climate, Conservation and Community. Within these areas, our work with Travelife has allowed us to create concrete goals and commitments which we have begun working towards as well as measure and formalise the work that is already ongoing.

Wilderness Ireland's leadership is wholly committed to the company's sustainability performance and endorses the company's sustainability mission statement and policy. We are committed to continuous improvement of sustainability practices, including the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of our sustainability policy, with dedicated personnel and resources to achieve our sustainability goals.

Climate

Carbon Reduction Targets

We are very aware that every trip we do has a carbon footprint which adds to the climate crisis. Wilderness Ireland has partnered with [Ecollective](#) to create a detailed system of carbon measurement that applies to both our trips and business travel. Every tour we offer online displays a carbon score so that our travellers can choose a trip that suits their carbon budgets or goals. This carbon measurement work also allows us to create a realistic road-map towards our goals of carbon reduction.

- By 2030 we commit to reducing our Scope 1 & 2 emissions by 90% and Scope 3 emissions by 50%.
- Between 2022 and 2030, where we can't reduce, we will invest in projects that remove, avoid or reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.
- Our goal is to achieve True Net Zero Status by the end of 2030, investing solely in projects that permanently remove carbon from the atmosphere for those emissions that remain.

Future challenges in reaching our target will include looking at how we can reduce road travel in our itineraries, how quickly we can introduce electric vehicles into our fleet and deciding which hotels we choose to work with.

For those residual emissions which we cannot eliminate, we also commit to removing the equivalent amount of carbon from the atmosphere by 2030. This will be done via investment in reforestation and afforestation projects in Ireland, with particular support channelled to our long-time conservation partners. This strategy of reduction and carbon removal will support our objective of achieving "True" Net Zero status by 2030.

Our approach has been validated by the Science Based Targets Initiative. The SBTi's Corporate Net Zero Standard is the world's first framework for corporate net-zero targets in line with climate science. It provides a common, robust and, most importantly, a science based understanding providing confidence to accredited businesses that their targets are aligned with climate science - helping to ensure a habitable planet for all. You can read more about SBTi here sciencebasedtargets.org/net-zero

Transport

When selecting transportation for guests and business travel, Wilderness Ireland prioritises choosing the most sustainable options available for travelling to, from, and within our destinations, while considering distance, cost, route, and comfort. We have established clear guidelines to reduce GHG emissions and select eco-friendly transportation, including the following measures:

- We are partnered with [Exito](#) – a premier flight company and member of [1% for the Planet](#) that specialises in booking seamless flights and offers 24-hour support in case of changes, delays, cancellation, or lost luggage while being fully committed to reducing the harmful effects of climate change.

Together, Wilderness Ireland and Exito are committed to reducing the carbon impact of travel by offsetting 100% of the CO2 emissions of our travellers flights that book through Exito.

- *Promotion of Public Transport:* We encourage clients to use public transportation when starting their trips, supporting sustainable travel choices and reducing carbon footprints. Our trips are designed to start and finish at train stations where possible.
- *Transition to Electric Vehicles:* We have made a commitment to transition our entire fleet of vehicles to 100% electric by 2030.
- *Carbon Labelling:* We offer a carbon label for all trips, allowing visitors to make informed decisions about their travel and promoting awareness of our environmental impact.
- *Distance Limitations:* We cap trip distances at a maximum of 1,000 km per departure, aiming for even shorter distances when possible, to minimise emissions and environmental impact.
- *Minimising Vehicle Use:* We strive to limit vehicle use and promote human-powered transportation modes such as walking, biking, or kayaking. This enhances the travel experience by fostering a closer connection to the environment and minimising ecological impact.
- *Small Tour Groups:* We restrict our tour group size to a maximum of 8 people to avoid large coaches. This approach supports more intimate experiences and allows us to use smaller independent suppliers.

Office

We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint and endeavour to reduce the amount we travel as much as possible. Some of the initiatives and achievements include:

- 100% of the energy for electricity and heating in our office and warehouse comes from renewable resources and we have invested in low-energy infra-red heating for our office.
- Our Switch-off policy encourages all employees to be mindful of leaving lights and electronic devices on when not in use whether working in the office or at home.
- We have formal monitoring procedures in place for office electricity consumption and we aim to further reduce our energy usage by 5% by the end of 2025.

- We encourage employees to work remotely for two days a week, reducing the need for daily commuting.
- We promote the use of virtual meeting options to decrease unnecessary travel for work-related purposes.
- We offer a bike-to-work scheme to promote eco-friendly transportation choices.
- We are committed to further developing and implementing a comprehensive sustainable purchasing policy.
- All office lights are LEDs and we are in the process of changing all the lights in our stores over to LEDs.
- We are phasing out plastic stationery to be replaced entirely by sustainably sourced pencils and recycled notepads by the end of 2024.

Conservation

In deciding to travel with Wilderness Ireland, each client chooses an adventure travel company that believes in the development of Ireland's sustainable tourism sector. We focus on developing sustainable operational practices and supporting the local tourism economy in the small, often remote communities in which we work.

Wilderness Conservation and Community Fund

Through our Wilderness Conservation and Community Fund, we provide financial support to various environmental and nature conservation charities, focusing on our collaboration with the [Burrenbeo Trust](#). Our office and guiding teams continue to innovate to improve our environmental performance in the communities and habitats in which we work and in implementing best-practice standards both in our office and in the field.

The Wilderness Conservation & Community Fund (WCCF) is an initiative that allows our travellers to give back to the environments and communities at the heart of our adventurous experiences in wild places.

Each holiday includes a small optional contribution (less than 1% of the trip price) to the WCCF. 100% of all traveller contributions received go to supporting a conservation and community project. Wilderness Ireland absorbs all of the administration costs of the fund and the projects, meaning the contributions deliver maximum impact.

Currently, we are working with the Burrenbeo Trust to support their conservation projects, such as dry stone walling, archaeological surveys, scrub management, monitoring species, managing the

landscape and fighting against invasive species. In addition, Burrenbeo runs workshops for children and adults, organises volunteer groups, and educates local communities to generate a sense of informed pride in their heritage and landscape.

We are committed to broadening the scope of our WCCF fund by 2026 to include another beneficiary that aligns with our goal of improving inclusivity and access in the outdoors.

Community

Employees

We recognize that our employees are our biggest asset for delivering meaningful travel experiences to our customers. Therefore, we maintain a clear human resource policy to ensure:

- Legal compliance in all regards
- A safe, healthy, and welcoming workplace
- Fair contract conditions including fair compensation
- Participation in the sustainability planning activities
- Inclusion and equal opportunity for all employees, particularly with regard to compensation, promotion, distribution of benefits, and professional development opportunities.

Wilderness Ireland and our associated businesses are committed to diversity through inclusive practices. We are looking to improve the diversity of our teams and believe firmly in the value of varied life experiences, backgrounds and cultures in our workplace.

We welcome and encourage diverse applicants for any advertised position and will consider all applicants regardless of age, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, health conditions, impairments or other characteristics.

Guides

Whilst out on tour it is our guides who play the most crucial role in delivering information and interpretation to our clients on various aspects of sustainability.

Wilderness Ireland commits to hiring qualified local guides, drivers or other local staff, paying them living wages and providing safe and fair working conditions. We expect the same from our suppliers that are hiring local staff.

All Wilderness Ireland guides are expected to have a Leave no Trace and a Remote First Aid qualification as a minimum. Beyond this minimum, guides are also required to have the appropriate outdoor qualification for the activity they are guiding.

The company is committed to ongoing training for all guides to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date. Yearly training camps are created to induct new guides and upskill returning guides. Topics covered include safety protocols, mediation, environmental conservation, and customer service.

We understand that guides are the intermediaries between the guests and the socio-cultural and environmental context of the destination, conveying the appropriate behaviour to them. Therefore, our guides are specifically trained to provide information on respecting local traditions and sensitive sites.

Suppliers

A key focus of Wilderness Ireland is interaction with the local community. We prioritise working with local businesses based in small communities, such as owner-run and Irish-owned hotels, guesthouses, restaurants and activities. To avoid overtourism, we promote tours in places that generally see less tourism. By working with small communities we also help to ensure that local traditions, culture, cuisine and most importantly, the Irish language, are protected and passed down.

Many of our guides and office staff speak Gaeilge, the Irish national language. Our guides are proud to share the language, customs and beliefs of the Irish people with visitors. We ensure that we use some Gaeilge in communications in the office, with suppliers and even our visitors.

Our tours provide meaningful and genuine opportunities for visitors to meet and interact with local people to learn their customs, traditions, language and beliefs, including traditions like tweed weaving, farming, traditional Irish music, sports such as hurling & GAA, sharing stories and folklore attached to the landscapes and more.

We seek out partners who incorporate a written sustainability statement as part of their business policy or have a clear sustainability plan in place. Whenever feasible, we choose partners that hold tourism-specific certifications recognized internationally (such as GSTC-accredited) or other sustainability certifications like B Corp or ISO.

We expect our suppliers to adhere to a code of conduct that encompasses the following responsible business practices:

- Adhering to all relevant local, regional, national, and international regulations. (Especially with regard to captive wildlife).
- Upholding all human rights, including labour, children's, and women's rights.
- Providing products and services that do not harm humans, animals, plants or natural resources.

- Ensuring fair employment conditions.
- Acting in the best interests of local communities and local cultures.

Clients

At Wilderness Ireland transparency and accuracy in providing product, price and carbon information are fundamental aspects of our business ethos. We are committed to ensuring that all details pertaining to our products and services, including sustainability claims, are presented in a clear, complete, and accurate manner. This commitment extends to our dedication to fostering trust and informed decision-making among our clients.

We strive to keep our clients informed about relevant laws and customs so that their stay in Ireland does not negatively impact the communities and traditions here. We do not allow the purchase of souvenirs containing threatened flora and fauna species, any illegally obtained historic/archaeological artefacts, drugs or illegal substances, and abide by local and international laws in place to prevent this.

Destinations

Wilderness Ireland commits to environmental stewardship in the destinations in which we operate by:

- Educating guests on our work with [Burren Beo](#) and informing them of the impact of their own donation which they will likely have paid at time of booking.
- Ensuring natural resources remain intact or even enhanced through litter-picking, beach cleans and other environmental volunteer days.
- Modelling the principles of Leave-No-Trace and educating guests on the principles of responsible travel and responsible visitor behaviour.
- Being mindful of over-tourism in our itinerary design.
- Prioritising independent, locally-owned, sustainably-certified suppliers where possible.
- Always starting our scheduled itineraries from train stations so that clients can choose a more sustainable method of travel.

Contact

All staff are responsible for the ownership and undertaking of this policy and all staff are responsible for the promotion and implementation of this sustainability policy within their departments.

The implementation of this policy will be led by the Sustainability Coordinator, Darragh Devaney, who can be reached at darragh@wildernessireland.com.

This policy is effective from 07/10/2024.