

# Galway International Arts Festival



## Sustainability Policy and Plan





## Who we are:

Founded in 1978, Galway International Arts Festival [GIAF] is a multi-disciplinary festival that features theatre, music, visual arts, dance, street spectacle, comedy and discussion that now is a key date in the Irish summer calendar and a major European festival.

It is an international festival brand, a world-class festival experience and an artistic leader in the presentation and production of international and new Irish work.





## Our Vision is:

We connect, curate, construct and create  
Ireland's most unique Arts experience —  
for everyone to enjoy, for all to share.





# Our Mission is:

To be World-Renowned for Great Cultural Experiences, Best Shared.





## Our Commitment:

Galway International Arts Festival will continue to transition the Festival to a sustainable future by significantly reducing its carbon footprint through the application of event best practices.





## Motivation:

The Festival brings together more than 400,000 attendances annually to over 32 venues in 14 days and all members of the organisation have a strong motivation to develop the Festival in as sustainable a way as possible.

Our aim is to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem in relation to climate change.





## Overarching Ambitions:

In 2022 the Festival developed a number of goals it wished to achieve by the end of the 2025 Festival and introduced a number of initiatives to support progress of these goals. This we considered as completing our first major step from 'Just Starting Out' to 'Making Progress' in the Fáilte Ireland Sustainable Festival's Guideline matrix with the aim of achieving 'Leading The Way' status by 2027.

Chief among these initiatives was the desire to transition to renewable energy sources, eliminate once off plastic use, achieve zero waste going to landfill and promote eco-friendly behaviours in its audiences and its 'supply chain'. We have made good progress in the last three years and will continue to pursue these goals as part of our core commitment to sustainability.

## Key Areas of Impact and Influence:

### ENERGY

Our aim is to transition completely to using 90% renewable energy by 2027.

### BUILDING BETTER

Our aim is to maximize the circular materials flow in all of our set and site constructions and venue fit outs.

### AUDIENCE AWARENESS

We actively programme talks and events highlighting climate and sustainability issues.

### WASTE

We protect the environment from any litter or pollution through our production decisions and onsite practices and work in partnership with our waste management company to minimize what goes to landfill. All waste is separated into either a 3 or 4 bin system.

### WATER

We actively promote water refill points and strongly discourage single use plastic water bottles.

### REDUCE ONCE OFF USAGE

We have removed all single use plastic containers from our Heineken® Big Top and Festival Garden sites.

### TRAVEL - GREENER MOBILITY

We will work with our transport providers to manage efficiently and effectively to minimize the environmental impact of all Festival travel. We will work with our audiences and public transport companies to discourage single occupancy car use.

### CARBON FOOTPRINT

We will progress the process of measuring the Festival's carbon footprint.





## Our Sustainability Journey So Far

Over the last number of years, GIAF has been introducing a number of sustainability initiatives. Key among these was a reduction in once off plastic use, a move away from fossil fuel use, a reduction in the amount of waste GIAF generates and the promotion of the use of public transport while attending the Festival.

In 2022 GIAF worked with its Drinks Partner, Heineken® on a reusable cup scheme at the Heineken® Big Top that eliminated the need for 45,500 plastic cups to be sent to landfill. In 2023 it expanded this scheme to the Festival Garden in Eyre Square, which has a footfall of over 156,000 people. In addition, all Festival concessions were asked to not use once off plastic containers or cutlery while suppliers were discouraged from once off plastic use.

All Festival generators transitioned to using bio-fuel while all lighting hires moved from tungsten lights to LED lights in GIAF temporary venues.

The Festival has sourced more energy from renewable sources, an initiative greatly helped through its collaboration with key venue partners, The University of Galway and Galway City Council, who are both committed to reducing their environmental impact. The University has been making huge strides in this area and is ranked number one among Irish universities and 34th in the world in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings while Galway City Council is part of the Net Zero Cities pilot study. The many University of Galway and Galway City Council owned venues, used by GIAF, now use energy from renewable sources.

In 2023 the Festival introduced the Green Ambassador programme, to assist, guide and encourage Festival attendees to engage in best waste management practices during the Festival. It also has been building its commitment to the circular economy over the last number of years through a strong focus on recycling and reuse of materials at the Festival's Workshop e.g. building sets, installations, galleries and bar construction and in venue conversation.

Since 2019, the Festival has also been sourcing organic cotton products for the GIAF merchandise shop. By 2022, 82% of the stock was organically sourced with GIAF tracing its supplier's authenticity for green procurement purposes and increasingly sourcing sustainable merchandise to enable a greener festival.

Finally, GIAF began promoting the use of public transport alternatives to private car use with Festival attendees in recent years, something it hopes to significantly build further on in this plan.





## Key Commitments, Objectives, Targets:

- 1 We will source 90% of GIAF's total energy requirements to run our venues from renewable resources by 2027.
- 2 We will continue to reduce our current waste production and build on our commitment to the circular economy.
- 3 We will further establish a baseline carbon footprint.
- 4 We will establish partnerships with stakeholders which support sustainable development.
- 5 We will promote behaviours in our staff, volunteers and artists that reduce our impact on the environment.
- 6 We will promote behaviours in our audiences that reduce their impact on the environment.
- 7 We will continue to influence our supply chains with a view to delivering more sustainable options.
- 8 We will continue to highlight sustainability issues in our Festival programming.
- 9 We will adequately resource the measures required to ensure the above objectives are achieved.

## Our priorities for the next year:

All of our nine commitments are equally important but measuring our carbon footprint is a particularly important and challenging priority for the Festival in the coming year.

## Who else will be involved:

Galway City Council

PACESETTERS collective\*

University of Galway

Climeaction

Align with like-minded sponsors who share the same principles and values as GIAF.

## Who is responsible for this policy:

The Green Team is made up of all the senior decision makers in the organization including Chief Executive, Artistic Director, Financial Controller, Administrator, Head of Production, Marketing Manager, Event Logistics Manager and Operations Manager.

\* PACESETTERS. The Festival is currently part of an EU Horizon Heritage programme with 14 UK and European partners called PACESETTERS, Powering Artistic and Cultural Entrepreneurship to drive the climate transition. The project aims to examine the concrete circumstances of climate change, anticipate future threats, and opportunities, investigate possible support mechanisms and stress-test instruments that enable art and culture, creativity and heritage to drive the climate transition.

# Sustainability Plan



# Sustainability Plan

Galway International Arts Festival aims to transition the Festival to a sustainable future by significantly reducing its carbon footprint through the application of event best practices over the next number of years.

## 1 Objective

**Ensure GIAF has a structure in place that supports the progression of our sustainability goals.**

### STRATEGY

Put in place a series of supports to progress GIAF's current goals.

#### Actions

- 1 Reconstitute the Green Team with primary decision makers to support sustainability in the planning stages.
- 2 Engage a Sustainability Manager for pre and post production, and during the Festival to audit GIAF's imprint.
- 3 Ensure the wider GIAF team engages with the work of the Sustainability Manager.
- 4 Continue to build up a picture of GIAF's carbon footprint using existing toolkits.
- 5 Explore partnerships that can help transition GIAF to more sustainable energy alternatives.

## 2 Objective

**Further reduce GIAF's dependency on fossil fuels.**

### STRATEGY #1

Examine practical transition options for "GIAF owned" temporary venues.

#### Actions

- 1 Review GIAF temporary venue power supplies and ensure all generators use 100% biofuel.
- 2 Develop possible options for switching to renewable energy sources in GIAF temporary venues and continue to ensure all lighting suppliers have moved from tungsten to LED in all our venues.

### STRATEGY #2

Work with third party GIAF venues to explore options for switching to renewable energy.

#### Actions

- 1 Review third party venue power supplies. Ascertain the energy providers through Galway City Council for Eyre Square, The Town Hall and the Black Box and through University of Galway for all our venues on campus.

### STRATEGY #3

Minimise the environmental impact of GIAF transport requirements.

#### Actions

- 1 Measure the Festival's transport footprint.
- 2 Develop possible options for switching to renewable energy transport options.
- 3 Explore options to reduce mileage.



## 3 Objective

**Reduce audience and artist's contribution to the Festival's carbon footprint.**

### STRATEGY #1

Promote the sustainability message to as wide an audience as possible.

#### Actions

- 1 Develop digital media campaign to promote sustainability options.
- 2 Encourage public transport companies to offer more late night options.
- 3 Promote alternatives to car use for Festival attendees.
- 4 Encourage waste separation and proper waste disposal at venues, especially The Festival Garden and the Heineken® Big Top.
- 5 Continue to use E-ticketing for all Festival events.

### STRATEGY #2

Deliver environment-focused programming in 2026.

#### Actions

- 1 Deliver environment-focused programming in various art forms.
- 2 Deliver environment-focused talks.

## 4 Objective

**Influence GIAF traders to adopt sustainable measures.**

### STRATEGY

Encourage traders to offer sustainable options in their services.

#### Actions

- 1 Continue to implement 'no plastic' policy in trader contracts.
- 2 Encourage traders to dispose of their waste sustainably.
- 3 Encourage traders to use sustainable materials/ingredients in their products.

## 5 Objective

**Further reduce current waste production.**

### STRATEGY

Focus more attention on in-venue and supplier opportunities to reduce waste.

#### Actions

- 1 Optimise waste avoidance and reduction options at GIAF temporary venues.
- 2 Eliminate once off plastic use in all GIAF temporary venues.
- 3 Encourage suppliers to adopt good waste management measures.
- 4 Encourage third party venues to adopt good waste management measures.
- 5 Encourage third party venues to move towards the elimination of once off plastic use.
- 6 Increase communication around waste separation at venues.

## 6 Objective

**Develop ways to support the GIAF circular economy.**

### STRATEGY #1

Support the GIAF circular economy in all in house builds and constructions.

#### Actions

- 1 Plan waste management for builds.
- 2 Plan waste management for get-ins.
- 3 Use as many recycled materials as possible for design and builds.
- 4 Encourage good waste management measures with GIAF with wider team.
- 5 Encourage good waste management measures with GIAF volunteers.

### STRATEGY #2

Support the GIAF circular economy in all get outs.

#### Actions

- 1 Plan waste management for get-outs.
- 2 Recycle as many materials as possible for future builds.

## 7 Objective

**Promote behaviours in GIAF staff, crew and volunteers that will support our sustainability goals.**

### STRATEGY

Create a series of appropriate measures in each group that support these goals.

#### Actions

- 1 Engage Climeaction as our Climate Action Partner to accurately measure our carbon footprint.
- 2 Optimise waste avoidance and reduction options in GIAF offices.
- 3 Eliminate once off plastic use in all GIAF offices.
- 4 Encourage good waste management measures with GIAF's wider team.
- 5 Encourage good waste management measures with GIAF's volunteers.
- 6 Keep an inventory and location log of all office equipment to avoid rebuying or replacing equipment we already own.

## 8 Objective

**Use the PACESETTERS project as a catalyst to further research, inform and refine the Festival's sustainability policy and future goals.**

### STRATEGY

Involve all senior members of the management team in the PACESETTERS programme to maximise the positive impact of the organisation.

#### Actions

- 1 Use the PACESETTERS programme as a platform to develop and refine our response to climate transition.
- 2 Ensure good communication around the PACESETTERS programme to inform our audience about its ambition and goals.



ABOVE: GREEN AMBASSADORS AT THE FESTIVAL GARDEN, EYRE SQUARE  
OVERLEAF: HEINEKEN® BIG TOP, GALWAY INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

# Thank You



[www.giaf.ie](http://www.giaf.ie)

@GalwayIntArts

