

# **SUSTAINABILITY AUDIT REPORT OF THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF YOUTH THEATRES 2023**


WRITTEN BY

**ALEX KONIECZKA  
UNDERSTORY**

## WELCOME NOTE

BS.c Alex Konieczka, Understory Founder

*I'm thrilled to have had the opportunity to see the wonderful work of Youth Theatre Ireland first-hand and to play a part in their journey to becoming leaders in sustainable practices in the youth theatre space.*



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## ABOUT UNDERSTORY

Understory is an environmental education and zero-waste organisation founded in 2020. It operates as a not-for-profit organisation, working with thousands of people of all ages and backgrounds, to foster positive attitudes towards sustainability, to strengthen nature connections and empower all, to become climate and biodiversity action leaders in their communities. This is achieved through high quality, tailored and interactive workshops, consultancy, project management and resources offered to individuals, community groups, primary and secondary schools, youth organisations, universities and businesses.

Understory is also a zero-waste organisation, meaning circular economy practices are weaved into all aspects of our work and only waste and sustainable materials are used in workshops and making of products.

## ABOUT THE FOUNDER

Alex Konieczka is an ecologist, holding a BSc. Natural Sciences, specialising in Environmental Science from Trinity College Dublin. Alex's heritage, lifelong passion for sustainability and experience working as an ecologist in Ireland and abroad means she has immense understanding of this field, including first-hand experience of the challenges and ambitions of living in harmony with nature.

Alex was the creator of an award winning 12 month corporate sustainability programme in one of the top Fortune 500 companies, where she acted as an eco-consultant and project manager. Her programme engaged and inspired behavioural change in over 400+ employees. After the positive reception and encouragement of colleagues and clients, she started Understory in 2020.

Alex now works as a director, educator, youth worker, project manager and zero-waste artist. Alex wants to respond to the current need for education and support, as people in Ireland are increasingly anxious about climate change. She wants to build skills and a sense of agency in people through nature connections and support. Alex cares about inclusivity and strives to make environmental education and nature experiences accessible to all.

## UNDERSTORY

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www.youtube.com/@understory\_ie7703

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The completion of the audit would not have been possible without the support and invaluable insight into the venue provided by the management team of the Kilkenny College Campus.

I cannot begin to express my thanks to the Sustainability Champions Ruairí Mannix, Will Pearman Howard, Brona Joyce, Gabriel Alzoub, Caoimhe McGinnity, Millie Starr, Imogen Mahon, Oisín Dutton, Fallon Ewert, Aidan Entrialgo Bayon, Evie Howard, Ruairí Connolly and Youth Theatre Leaders, who assisted in the collation of data and participated in talks and workshops. Their ingenious suggestions, insights and patience cannot be underestimated.

I also wish to thank everyone who attended the National Festival of Youth Theatres for being part of the Sustainability Audit and partaking in Sustainability-themed activities.



# PREFACE

1.1 Youth Theatre Ireland, the national development organisation for youth theatre was established in 1980. Youth Theatre Ireland is committed to youth-centered drama practice and providing a place to develop young artists and young citizens. YT promotes youth drama opportunities that focus on the artistic, personal, and social development of young people by supporting a network of youth theatres, working in partnership with local and national stakeholders and providing leadership for the sector. YR also develop new youth theatres in partnership with local groups and agencies.

YT supports youth theatre in practice by offering opportunities for young people through our annual programme activities including the National Youth Theatre, the National Festival of Youth Theatres, and the Young Critics Programme and support for youth theatre leaders and directors including training and mentorship, commissioning new writing, publications, resources and other services as well as research and policy development.

1.2 In April 2022, Youth Theatre Ireland contracted Alex Konieczka of Understory, who specialises in sustainability and youthwork, to carry out a sustainability audit of the National Festival of Youth Theatres, provide an insight into the festival through the sustainability lens and present a list of specific recommendations in the form of a report. This is the report.

1.3 Understory is an environmental education and zero-waste organisation established in 2020. Understory provides a range of services including workshops, training courses, sustainability audits, consulting and project management. Pedagogies of experiential hands-on outdoor play & discovery in real-life environments are weaved throughout and supported with practical and relevant actions that have positive environmental and social benefits.

1.4 Whilst 'sustainability' is a common term, there is not necessarily a shared understanding of its meaning. Sustainability refers to the ability to maintain or support a process continuously over time. In the context of the Youth Theatre Festival, the purpose of introducing sustainability is to reduce and prevent the use of items that are harmful to the environment, come from unsustainable and non-renewable sources that lead to the depletion of natural or physical resources. Besides environmental benefits, adaptation of sustainable practices is also encouraged to ensure increasing sustainability expectations of society are met and ensure longevity and resilience of the festival in changing times. More about this on page 8.





Kilkenny College campus

Source: [kilkennycollege.ie](http://kilkennycollege.ie)



# PROCESS

2.1 The scope of the project was agreed between Eoghan Doyle, the Chief Executive Officer, Alan King the Co-Director, and the Understory Director and Auditor, Alex Konieczka.

2.2 Alex Konieczka attended an in-person meeting with the staff team to introduce the sustainability project and go through the festival's timetable.

2.3 Alex Konieczka attended the festival in-person with a view to assess how the festival is run, learn about the attitudes and behaviour of participants, lead workshops and measure the festival's environmental footprint.

2.4 All participating Youth Theatres nominated a Sustainability Champion each. These nominees engaged in interactive 'lightning talks', workshops and took part in data collection through surveys and interviews.

2.5 Key metrics were gathered for the duration of the festival. This covered themes of travel, waste, food, plastics, energy and attitudes and behaviour.

2.6 Alex Konieczka drew up conclusions and a list of recommendations in this report.



# CONSIDERATIONS

Sustainability audits have gained prominence in recent years as organisations seek to assess and enhance their environmental, social, and economic practices. In the context of the National Festival of Youth Theatres, organised by Youth Theatre Ireland, conducting a sustainability audit presents a valuable opportunity to evaluate and improve current practices. However, it's essential to recognise that such audits must operate within certain constraints, including resource limitations, contractual obligations, and regulatory considerations. This section explores the key considerations and constraints of a sustainability audit at the National Festival of Youth Theatres, highlighting aspects of current practices that may be challenging to change.

## I. Financial Constraints and Contractual Obligations

Youth Theatre Ireland relies on funding from various sources to support the National Festival of Youth Theatres. These funding streams often come with contractual obligations and deliverables. One of the most significant constraints in implementing sustainability initiatives is the need to balance these contractual obligations with sustainability goals. Sustainability considerations should ideally be integrated into funding applications and budgets, ensuring that resources are allocated appropriately. However, if funders do not explicitly demand sustainability measures, it may feel high-risk to assign substantial budget to it. Financial sustainability relies on securing funding, which means striking a delicate balance between meeting contractual obligations and implementing sustainable practices.

## II. Venue Limitations

The festival takes place on the campus of Kilkenny College, and Youth Theatre Ireland may not have full control over all aspects of the venue's operations. Venue limitations could encompass factors such as energy use, waste management, and infrastructure. While there may be room for negotiation and collaboration with the venue, some aspects of the festival's sustainability may be constrained by the limitations of the venue itself.

## III. Creative Vision vs. Sustainability

It's essential to recognise that sustainability initiatives should enhance the quality and longevity of the festival rather than compromise its creative vision. The artistic and creative aspects of the National Festival of Youth Theatres are of utmost importance and must be preserved. Sustainability measures should be implemented in ways that complement, rather than hinder, the festival's creative objectives. Striking this balance is a critical consideration for any sustainability audit.

## IV. Data Quality and Self-Reporting

Like many sustainability audits, the assessment of sustainability at the National Festival of Youth Theatres partially relied on self-reported data from staff and participants. Although best efforts were made to ensure the data is accurate, self-reporting introduces a potential constraint related to data quality and accuracy. The reliability of audit results depends on the accuracy and completeness of the data collected. Inaccurate or incomplete information can lead to skewed assessments and hinder the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives.



# WHY CHOOSE SUSTAINABILITY?





# THE FUTURE IS SUSTAINABLE

Sustainability has become an integral part of our society, and it's gaining increasing significance in Ireland. A notable 85% of adults (EPA, 2022) and a remarkable 97% of young people express concerns about climate change (ECO-UNESCO, 2022). These rising concerns are inspiring individuals to delve deeper into environmental issues and take concrete steps towards climate action, forming a movement that shows promise for continued growth.

Each festival holds substantial potential to ignite broader societal change. While it may seem that a gathering of a few hundred people couldn't possibly make a dent in the grand challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, it's worth recognising that individual young people, leaders, and event staff, each taking small yet meaningful actions, can be the seeds of transformation. Through incremental progress, the youth theatre culture can undergo a fundamental shift, with sustainability embedded at the core of decision-making processes. This, in turn, can serve as an inspiring example for participants' families, local schools, and businesses, motivating them to adopt sustainable practices and reduce their environmental footprints. These community-level changes can, in time, exert influence on larger organisations, policymakers, and governments, not only within Ireland but also on a global scale. It all commences with your initiative and your attendees—empowering you to become a driving force in the fight against biodiversity loss and climate change.

A youth theatre festival that embraces sustainable practices not only sets a positive precedent for young participants and the audience but also contributes to overarching objectives of environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic sustainability. Here are some of the benefits of being a sustainable youth theatre festival:

**Positive Public Image:** A youth theatre festival that is committed to sustainability sends a positive message to the public, sponsors, and partners. Demonstrating a commitment to environmental and social responsibility can enhance the festival's reputation and attract support from like-minded individuals and organisations.

**Educational Opportunity:** A youth theatre festival is an ideal platform to educate young participants and audiences about the importance of sustainable practices. Through performances, workshops, and discussions, participants can learn about environmental issues, resource conservation, and responsible consumption. This educational component can empower young people to become environmentally conscious citizens.

**Long-Term Viability:** Implementing sustainable practices ensures the festival's longevity. By minimising negative environmental impacts, the festival can continue to operate without depleting resources or causing harm to the environment. This allows future generations to enjoy and benefit from the festival as well.

**Environmental Impact:** Theatre festivals often involve significant resource consumption, including energy, water, and materials. By adopting sustainable practices such as using renewable energy sources, reducing waste, and conserving water, the festival can significantly lower its carbon footprint and overall environmental impact.

**Innovation and Creativity:** Integrating sustainability into a youth theatre festival can spur innovation and creativity. Encouraging participants to think about how to convey sustainability messages through their performances and artistry can lead to unique and thought-provoking productions.

**Community Engagement:** Embracing sustainability can foster a sense of community engagement and responsibility. Involving local businesses, organisations, and residents in sustainable initiatives can create a shared sense of purpose and pride, enhancing the festival's impact beyond its immediate artistic offerings.

**Economic Efficiency:** Sustainable practices often lead to cost savings in the long run. For example, using energy-efficient lighting, reducing waste through recycling and reusing materials, and minimising water consumption can result in lower operational costs.

**Alignment with Values:** Many young people today prioritise sustainability and social responsibility. A youth theatre festival that aligns with these values is more likely to attract participants, volunteers, and audiences who are passionate about making a positive impact on the world.

**Global Responsibility:** Sustainability is a global imperative. By instilling sustainable values and practices within young participants, a youth theatre festival contributes to a generation that is more conscious of its role in preserving the planet and creating a better future.

Incorporating sustainability into a youth theatre festival requires careful planning, collaboration with stakeholders, and a commitment to continuous improvement. By doing so, the festival can amplify its impact, raise awareness about important issues, and foster a generation of socially and environmentally conscious individuals. More about this on page 48.



# **2023 NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF YOUTH THEATRES**

**Mon 3- Fri 7 July 2023.  
12 Youth Theatres from all  
over Ireland.  
140+ festival attendees,  
leaders and staff.  
390+ people on campus in  
total during the week of the  
festival.**

# ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

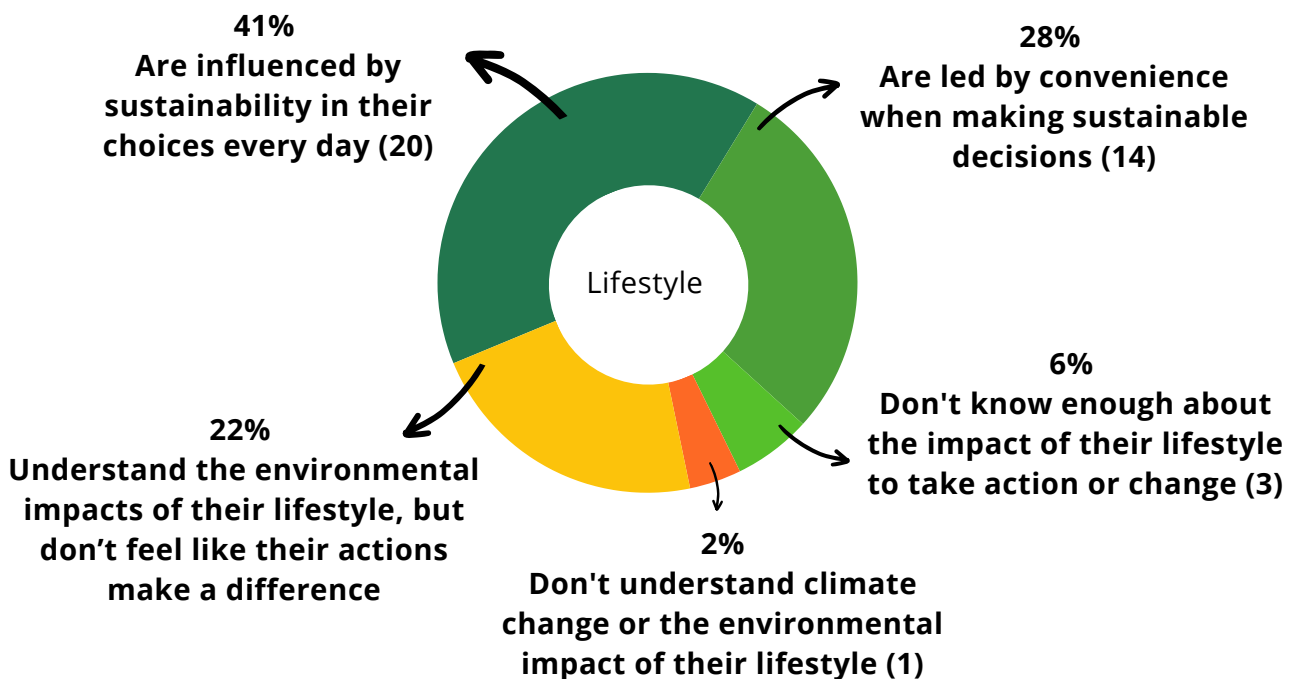
We know young people, leaders and staff are very keen to take part in the festival, meet new people and take part in the activities, but do they also care about sustainability?

**Yes, they do!**

- The majority (51%) said they feel extremely concerned about climate change and environmental issues (25)
- 39% attendees said they feel concerned (19)
- 8% feel a little concerned (4)
- Only 1 person said they don't feel concerned at all, accounting for 2% of all respondents.



- Every single respondent (100%) was interested in reducing their carbon footprint and taking action against climate change (49).





- 59% of respondents feel that they are NOT doing enough in their own life to reduce their environmental impact (29), with 41% of attendees feeling that they ARE doing enough.

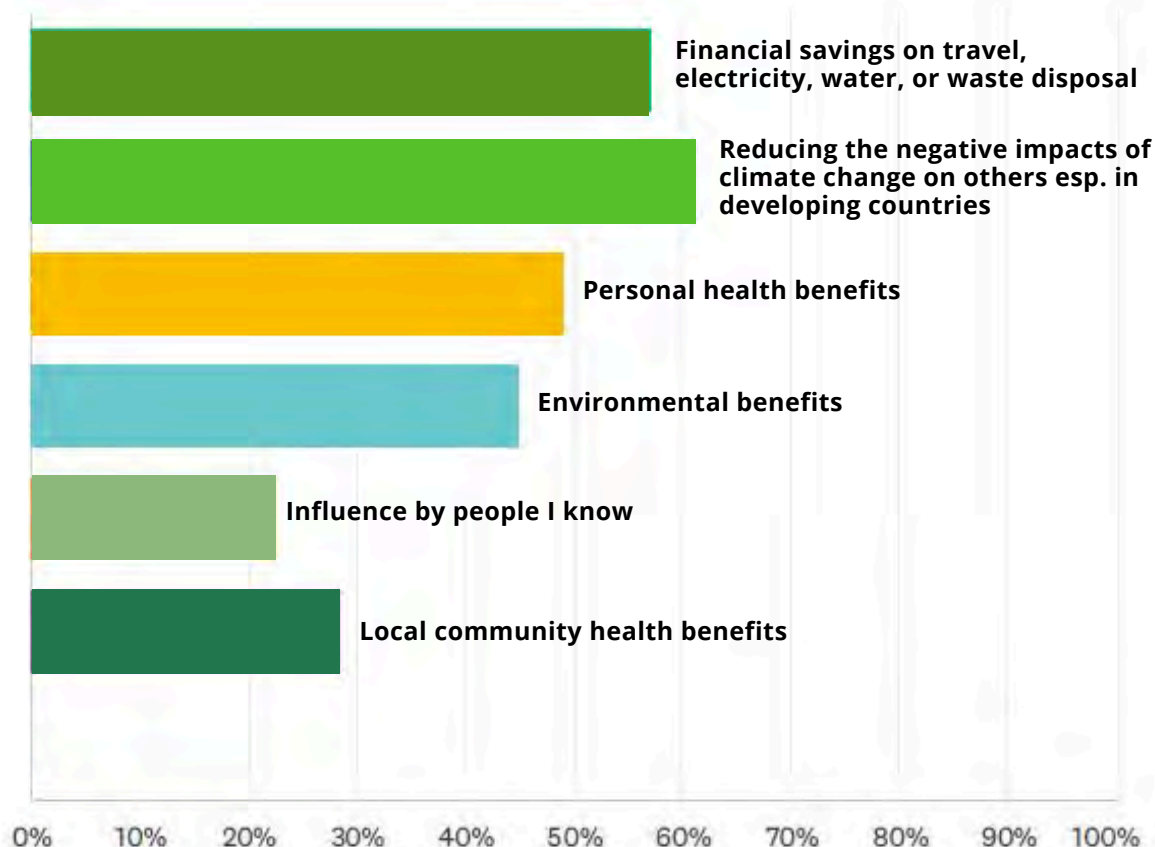


- 59% of festival attendees are very willing to learn about and engage in green behaviors, such as sustainable consumerism, recycling, composting, energy and water conservation (29).
- 33% are somewhat willing (16).
- 6% need more support and encouragement as they reported not being sure (2) and being somewhat unwilling to learn more and engage in green behaviours (1).
- Only 1 person had no interest accounting for 2% of the respondents.

### Top three influences on attendees views about the environment:

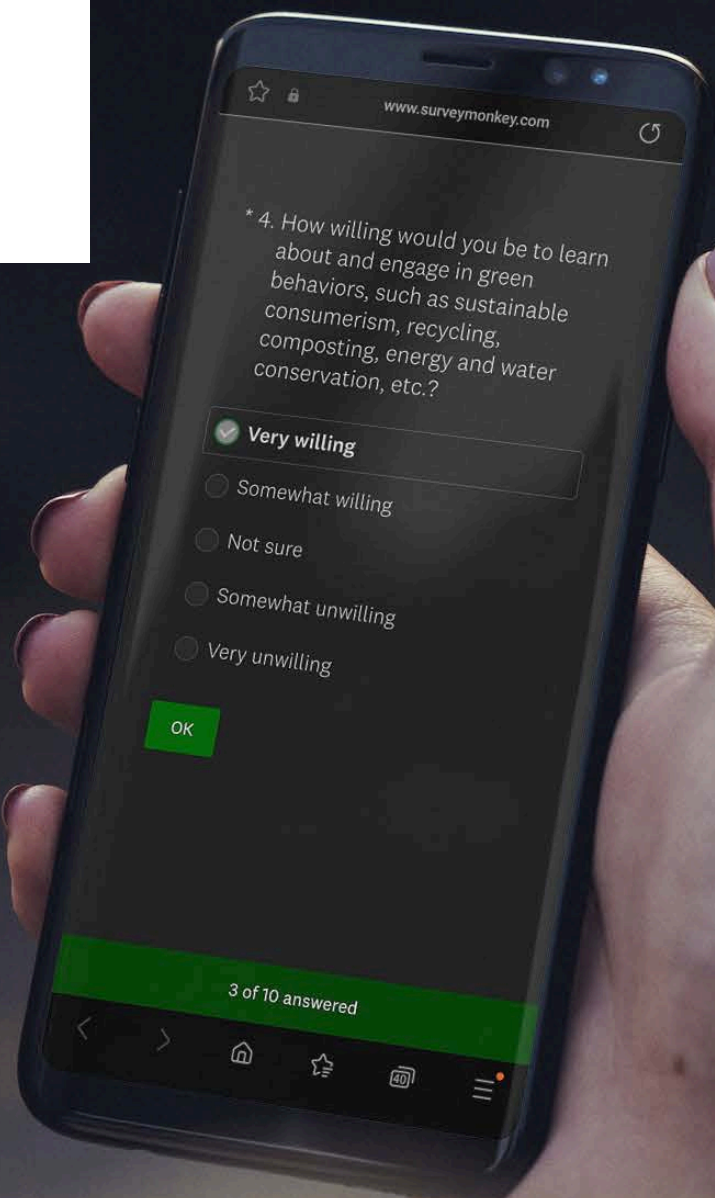
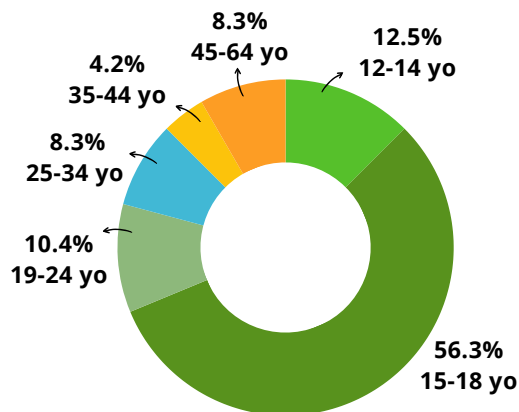
1. Media (TV, news, film, Instagram, Tiktok etc)
2. Academics/scientists
3. School/youth club

### Motivators:



# ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

- The survey was open to all people taking part in the National Festival of Youth Theatres.
- 49 individuals completed the survey
- 51% of survey respondents identified as female, 41% as male and 8% identified as other.
- The ages of respondents ranged from between 12-64 years of age.





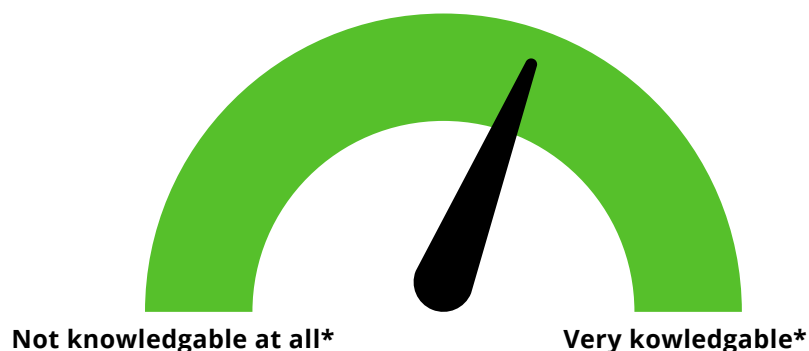
# KNOWLEDGE OF ATTENDEES

The survey included a climate science question designed to test the attendees knowledge. The majority (86%) of respondents were able to correctly identify Carbon dioxide, methane, water vapour and nitrous oxides as examples of greenhouse gases (42).

Sustainability and climate science questions were also part of the Quiz. Here is how the participants did:

- Only a 1/4 of youth theatres (3) chose the correct answer when asked what has the biggest global carbon footprint (correct answer: Energy use)
- 5/6 knew glitter is a microplastic (10).
- 5/6 were NOT able to name the famous Climate Stripes used to illustrate changes in temperature as a result of climate change (10).
- All youth theatres correctly identified H&M as a fast fashion retailer (12).
- All youth theatres correctly identified Sir David Attenborough from a photo (12).
- When asked how many sustainable development goals there are, 8 youth theatres were correct, however 3 were wrong by 23 goals, guessing that there were 40 in total.

Participants demonstrated knowledge around plastic and fashion but further education is needed to provide a more thorough overview of sustainability.



\*Based on answers to 7 questions.



**FINDINGS WITHIN  
THE KEY THEMES**

# TRANSPORT

Audience travel usually accounts for the largest portion of the carbon footprint of any event. The different modes of transport to the National Festival of Youth Theatres included cars, vans, coaches or minibuses and public transport (luas, train, bus). The below includes travel information of 12 youth theatres, the organiser, Youth Theatre Ireland and external facilitators.

**36%**  
travelled by car

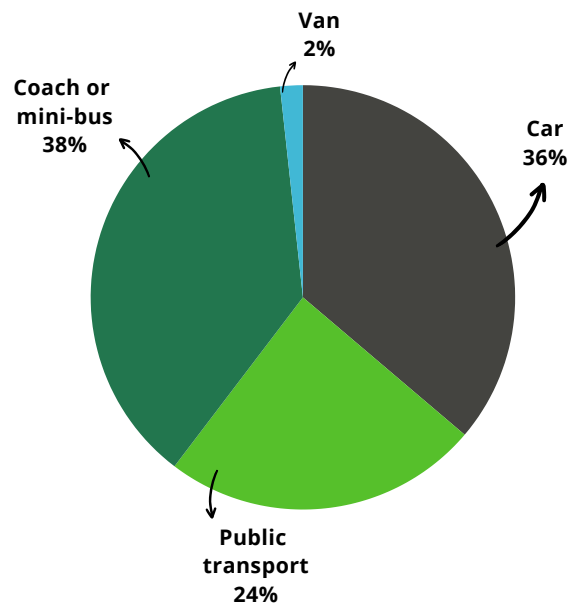
**24%**  
travelled by public transport

**38%**  
travelled by coach or mini-bus

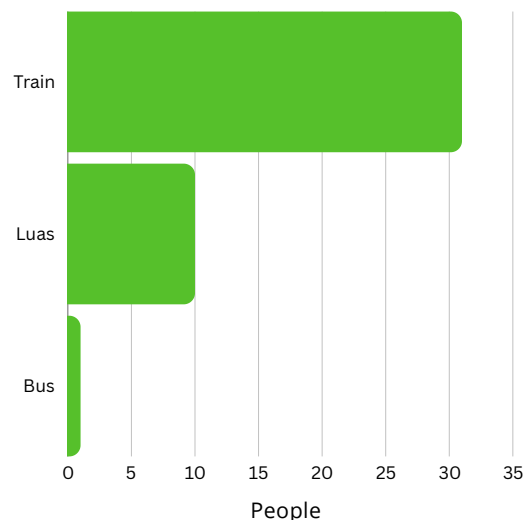
**2%**  
travelled by van

**17 cars**  
**10 coaches or mini-buses**  
**1 van**

**AUDIENCE TRAVEL NATIONAL FESTIVAL  
OF YOUTH THEATRES 2023**



Out of all the public transport options, the train was the most popular.



# TRAVEL FOOTPRINT

The travel footprint analysis encompasses both the journeys to and from the festival. To assess this impact, we employed metrics such as the fuel efficiency of various modes of transport and recorded the mileage traveled. This comprehensive approach allows us to gain insights into the environmental implications of the festival's travel.

**Total Travel Footprint of the Festival of Youth Theatres equals**

**1.7 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e**

CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent is the metric measure used to compare the emissions from various greenhouse gases on the basis of their capacity to warm the atmosphere – their global warming potential.

For context, Ireland's Greenhouse Gas emissions in 2022 were estimated to be 60.76 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>eq) for a population of 5.1 million people (EPA, 2023).

**Total travelled  
6,150 km**

**1.7 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> is equivalent to:**

**860**

**Kilograms of coal burned**



**4**

**Barrels of oil consumed**



To offset this carbon footprint, you'd have to plant 80 Sessile Oaks and manage the plantation for 4 years.



**x 80 for 4 years**

Offsetting 1-2 tons of carbon through reforestation can be as cheap as 50 euro!

\*Based on information provided by festival staff and attendees.



# WASTE AND LITTER

Auditing waste and litter at a festival is essential for reducing negative environmental impact, improving resource management and aligning with sustainability goals. It provides a holistic view of the festival's environmental impact and offers opportunities for improvement that can benefit the festival, its attendees, and the environment. This section examines the waste and litter produced during the National Festival of Youth Theatres.

**The festival generated approx. 1,440l waste\*.**



**Bins are segregated into Compost, General Waste and Recycling with separate cardboard collection.**

- Predominant types of waste generated during the festival were single-use plastics (e.g., cups, bottles, and wrappers). Understanding the waste composition is essential for targeted waste reduction efforts.
- Some bins were not clearly labelled, missing out on recycling opportunities and resulting in higher quantities of general waste.
- Some items in the bin were not clean, dry and loose.
- No specific outdoor areas suffered from littering however snacking in dorms did attract ants!
- Items like cardboard, food waste and glass are managed appropriately.

\*estimated by the waste management team

# SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

Single-use plastic products cover products that are made wholly or partly of plastic and are typically intended to be used just once or for a short period of time before they are thrown away. Many single-use plastic management strategies exist to reduce use and mitigate environmental impacts, including extended producer responsibility (EPR), deposit-return schemes, bans or taxes, and public outreach and education.



In Ireland, 2021 marked the ban of several single-use plastic products, including plastic cutlery and straws, from being placed on the Irish market. We are slowly banning single-use plastics as a country and organisations should take care to eliminate their own single-use plastic usage.



Contents of a recycling bin on the last day of the festival



Plastic cups (attendees signed their cup and reused it for the duration for the festival)



Plastic table cloth

Efforts were made to consider sustainability and reduce waste. A large proportion of single-use plastic were confectionary wrappers and plastic cups made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET). Although fully recyclable, the cups were made with petrochemicals and their production emitted Greenhouse Gas Emissions and thusly their use should be eliminated. Sustainability champions also identified single-use plastics in the canteen area. These seemingly innocuous items, when multiplied by the scale of the festival, had the potential to leave a considerable environmental impact and offer a great opportunity to reduce this in the future.

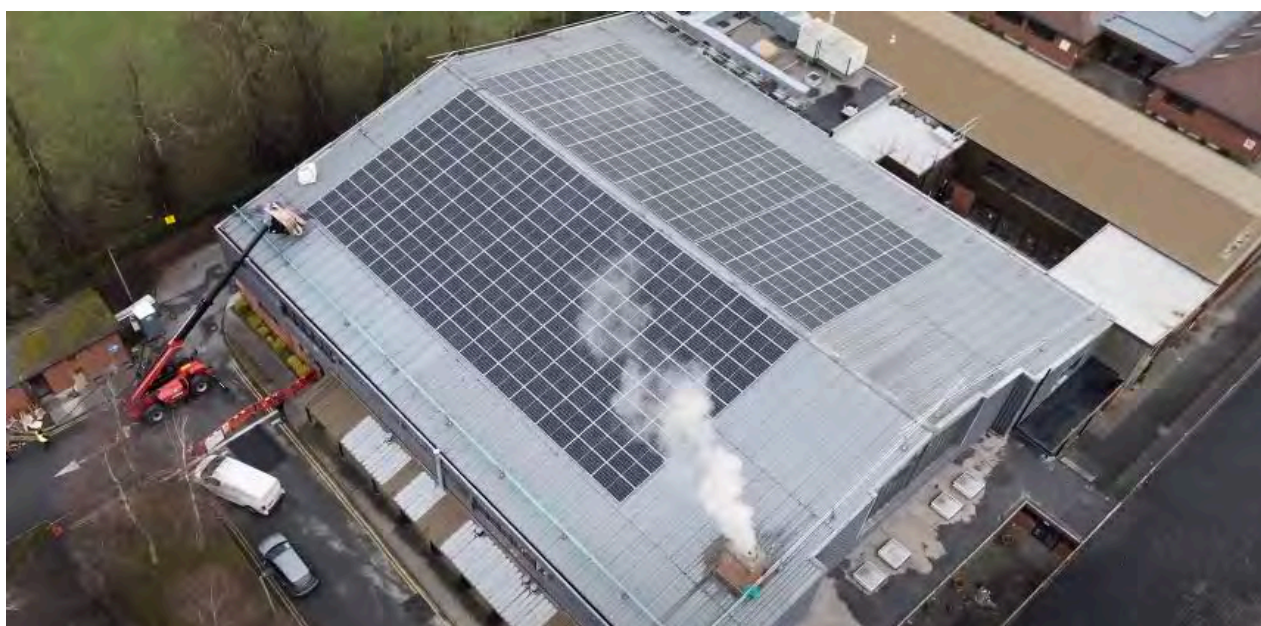


# ENERGY

We need to consider both how much energy we are using (expressed in kilowatts / kW and described as 'the load') and how long we use it for (expressed in hours); collectively these metrics make up the common unit of electrical consumption known as the kilowatt-hour (kWh) - which is often referred to as demand. Due to limitations, we cannot say the exact number of kilowatts used by the National Festival of Youth Theatres, however we do have an insight into energy consumption of the campus for each day of the festival.

National Festival of Youth Theatres attendees made up a total of 36% of people on campus during the five day period. There were approximately 140+ festival attendees, with 390 people in total on campus.

**Kilkenny College Campus is predominantly powered by solar panels, with the total energy consumed during the festival coming from energy generated by solar panels.**



Solar panels on Kilkenny College campus

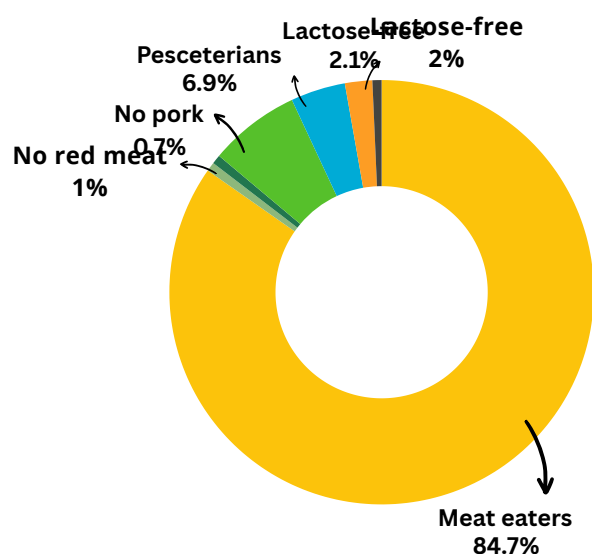
## Campus energy use:

3rd July	525 kWh (solar)	0.37 tons of CO2 avoided
4th July	580 kWh (solar)	0.41 tons of CO2 avoided
5th July	525 kWh (solar)	0.37 tons of CO2 avoided
6th July	288 kWh (solar)	0.20 tons of CO2 avoided
7th July	423 kWh (solar)	0.30 tons of CO2 avoided

**1.65t CO<sup>2</sup>  
avoided**

# FOOD & CATERING

In the realm of sustainability, food and catering offer a unique opportunity to enact positive change. Food & catering practices were investigated to better understand current practices through the audit and interviews with the catering manager.



Options offered:

- ✓ **Vegan**
- ✓ **Vegeterian**
- ✓ **Pesceterian**
- ✓ **Gluten-free**

## 1. Sustainable Sourcing:

- The college catering manager makes efforts to prioritise local ingredients. Fruit and veg is purchased from a local grocer Deegan Fresh Produce, other products come from Musgraves including Irish beef, Avonmore milks and Irish pride bread.
- More can be done to offer Irish-origin products to staff and festival attendees.

## 2. Palm Oil Usage:

- Rich tea biscuits and other confectionery offered by the organisation contained palm oil that was not RSPO-Certified.

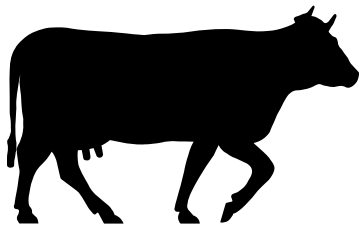
## 3. Plastic Packaging:

- Individually plastic-wrapped confectionary, jams and sauces were present in the canteen and in staff areas.
- External catering vendor who hosted the BBQ made efforts to provide vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free options however cutlery provided was plastic.

## 4. Waste Management:

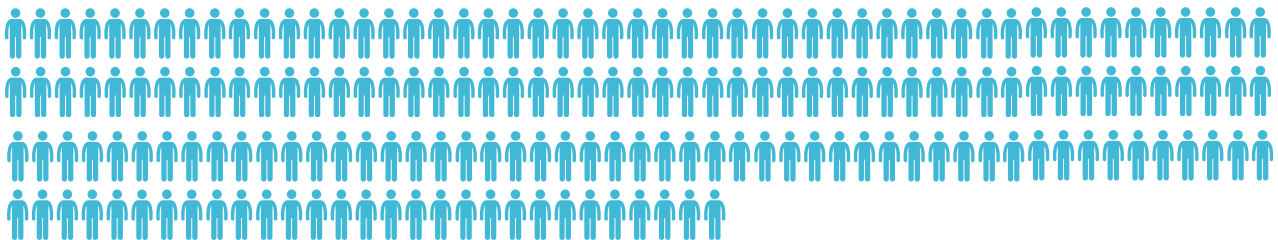
- Canteen staff composted food waste.
- Less food waste generated during the festival compared to average food waste by other groups.
- Vegan and vegetarian options can sometimes not be picked on the day, despite prior dietary requirements specifications.

# FOOD & CATERING FOOTPRINT



Serving beef spaghetti bolognese to a total of 150 people on one of the days of the festival contributes a total of **1082.6 kg CO<sub>2</sub>eq** produced for the beef alone. This is an equivalent of 39.3 liters of gasoline consumed.

Moreover, this amount of beef uses thousands of meters squared of land and consumes **195,678 liters of water**. That's how much water 179 people drink in a year!



In comparison, if 150 people were to swap to a plant-based meal on one of the days of the festival, the total kg of CO<sub>2</sub>eq produced would be lowered by 649.1 kg CO<sub>2</sub>eq, amounting to **433.5 kg CO<sub>2</sub>eq**. In conclusion, dietary Greenhouse Gas emissions in meat-eaters are approximately twice as high as those in vegans. This could also **reduce water consumption by as much as 50%** depending on the ingredients of the plant-based meal.



Sources: Pamuła, H. and Zajac, A. Meat Footprint Calculator  
Scarborough, P., Appleby, P.N., Mizdrak, A. et al. Dietary greenhouse gas emissions of meat-eaters, fish-eaters, vegetarians and vegans in the UK. Climatic Change 125, 179–192 (2014).



# SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOPS

A photograph of three people standing in a field of tall grass under a clear blue sky. The image is cropped to focus on the lower half of the individuals. The person on the left is wearing dark jeans with the cuffs rolled up and white socks. The person in the middle is wearing a light blue t-shirt and dark pants. The person on the right is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. The text 'SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOPS' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters in the upper left portion of the image.

# EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION



Left to right: Alex Konieczka, Ruairí Mannix, Will Pearman Howard, Bróna Joyce, Caoimhe McGinnity, Millie Starr, Imogen Mahon, Oisín Dutton, Fallon Ewert, Aidan Entrialgo Bayon, Evie Howard, Ruairí Connolly, Gabriel Alzoubi, Eoghan Doyle. The National Festival of Youth Theatres 2023.

As part of the Sustainability Audit carried out by Understory, we organised a series of engaging and interactive sessions designed for Sustainability Champions to empower young people with the knowledge and tools to make a positive impact on the environment. These sessions covered a broad spectrum of subjects, from travel to attitudes and behaviors that contribute to a more sustainable future.

**Advocacy:** We discussed the importance of advocacy in driving change and the role young people play in shaping their communities and the world at large. Young people shared stories of reaching out to policymakers and businesses. Participants also had a shot at sharing their audit findings with the Youth Theatre Ireland Director Eoghan Doyle through a role-play exercise.

**Travel and Transportation:** Attendees explored the environmental impact of various modes of transportation and investigated their youth theatre's travel information to the festival. discussed strategies for reducing carbon footprints.

**Waste Reduction:** Participants delved into the world of waste management, emphasising the importance of reducing, reusing, and recycling. They learned about Ireland's waste strategy, current challenges, the impact of waste on the environment and practical steps to minimise waste generation.

**Food Sustainability:** This workshop explored the journey of food from farm to plate, investigated food system facts and myths and discovered innovative and traditional sustainable farming techniques. Attendees learnt about the concept of food miles of their favourite snacks and learnt about ingredients that cause significant environmental damage worldwide. Participants left with an understanding of environmental and ethical implications of their dietary decisions and how they can support sustainable food systems. Young people kept a food diary for the duration of the festival.

**Single-Use Plastics:** In this sessions, we discussed how plastic is made. The harmful consequences of single-use plastics were unveiled. Young people carried out a single-use plastic audit and learned about alternatives to single-use plastics.

**Energy:** We discussed energy generation on campus and explored the benefits of renewable energy. Attendees were encouraged to take actions to conserve energy.

**Attitudes and Behaviors:** We discussed the power of individual and collective actions and behaviors in driving sustainability. Attendees explored the psychology behind sustainable decision-making and how small changes can lead to significant environmental impacts. They explored their values and assessed their peers to learn about their motivators and willingness to change.

The workshops were designed to be interactive and thought-provoking, fostering open discussions and encouraging young people to reflect on their roles as stewards of the environment. Attendees left with practical knowledge, skills in research, data collection and communication as well as actionable insights, and a heightened awareness of their capacity to effect positive change.

Incorporating these workshops into the festival's program not only educated, informed and inspired the youth attendees but also underscored the festival's commitment to sustainability. The discussions and actions initiated during these sessions serve as a testament to the festival's dedication to fostering an environmentally conscious and responsible generation of festival-goers. As these young individuals carry the lessons learned into their daily lives, they become active participants in the ongoing journey toward a more sustainable future.



# WHAT WORKED WELL



# SUCSESSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

As part of the sustainability audit conducted at the National Festival of Youth Theatres, several commendable practices were identified, reflecting the festival's commitment to environmental responsibility and resource efficiency. These notable achievements demonstrate the festival's dedication to sustainability:

## **Reusable Tote Bags**

The festival successfully implemented the use of reusable tote bags, reducing the reliance on single-use plastic bags and promoting eco-friendly alternatives for attendees.

## **Incorporating Sustainability into Activities**

Efforts were made to infuse sustainability into various festival activities, such as the treasure hunt and quiz. This creative approach engaged participants in a fun and educational manner.

## **Youth Workshops**

The inclusion of workshops aimed at educating young people about sustainability not only enhanced their understanding but also encouraged them to adopt eco-conscious behaviours.

## **Reuse of Plastic Items**

Notably, the festival made conscious efforts to reduce waste and reuse plastic items, such as the plastic cups which were kept and reused by attendees.

## **Reusable Pull-Up Banners**

The festival opted for reusable pull-up banners, reducing the demand for disposable signage materials and contributing to waste reduction.

## **Information Sharing through a TV screen**

Utilising television screens to share information represented an effective means of communication with attendees, providing them with valuable insights into sustainability practices and event updates.

## **Reusable Decorations**

Although a lot of the decorations were not themselves sustainable, they were reused which underscores the organisation's commitment to minimising waste.

## **Equipment Borrowing and Hiring**

The practice of borrowing or hiring equipment when needed demonstrates a resource-conscious approach, avoiding unnecessary consumption and waste.

### **Smart Travel**

Leaders of two youth theatres shared a coach to get to the festival, not only saving money and reducing the carbon footprint associated with travel but also fostering collaboration among participating groups. The van hired by Youth Theatre Ireland to transport equipment was also fuel efficient and had low carbon emissions.

### **Social Impact**

The festival generated a significant social impact by engaging and educating participants and attendees. This impact extends beyond the event itself, influencing broader communities.

### **Effective Communication**

Strong communication between the festival organisers and the venue played a pivotal role in ensuring that resources were used efficiently. This coordination facilitated informed decision-making and reduced the risk of resource wastage.

### **Venue Awareness**

Youth Theatre Ireland's comprehensive understanding of the venue's available resources and infrastructure enabled them to plan effectively and make informed choices, optimizing resource utilisation.



# WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT



Photo credit: Barry Morgan, YTI



# IMPROVEMENT AREAS

All of the six areas of improvement present opportunities for Youth Theatre Ireland. The importance of the key areas is explained below while the recommended actions can be found on page 37.

## Transport

Festival attendees organise their own travel with significant numbers using coaches, carpooling and using public transport however some improvements can be made to reduce carbon emissions of travel to and from the festival.

## Education

Engaging young people in sustainability and environmental education workshops was fantastic. Young people not only gained knowledge on key sustainability topics but also upskilled in teamwork, auditing, interviewing and presenting. The workshops fit in within the time constraints of the festival's busy schedule but they did infringe on young people's lunchtimes and free time. More can be done to educate both young people and adults participating in the festival.

## Products from unsustainable sources

Some food products offered at the National Festival of Youth Theatres were not Fairtrade certified. Ingredients such as cocoa and sugar are associated with poverty incomes and a range of human rights abuses. Buying Fairtrade supports payment of a fairer share of profits to producers. Suppliers such as Amazon should also be avoided due to monopolistic behavior, serious ethical and environmental concerns.

## Presence of palm oil in products

Some products offered to staff and participants included unsustainable palm oil. Today palm oil is used in more than half the world's packaged goods, across both food and personal care items, however products made with palm oil are linked with negative environmental and ethical impacts.

- The conversion of forests into palm oil plantations results in the loss of biodiversity and disrupts delicate ecosystems. Many endangered and unique species are at risk due to habitat destruction and fragmentation.
- The draining and burning of peatlands for palm oil cultivation release significant amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. This contributes to climate change and exacerbates global warming.
- Palm oil production has been linked to various human rights abuses, including unfair labor practices and land conflicts with indigenous communities. Workers in some palm oil plantations face poor working conditions and low wages.
- The use of pesticides and fertilisers in palm oil cultivation can lead to water pollution, harming aquatic ecosystems and communities downstream.

Given these concerns, many consumers and organisations are actively seeking sustainable alternatives to palm oil. These alternatives can be found on page 40.





Palm oil plantation in Malaysia



## Waste management

The campus did not have clearly labelled bins throughout. Lack of clear labelling can lead to confusion and missed opportunities to recycle or compost waste. Poor waste management has wide-ranging negative impacts on the environment, public health, and communities.

- Greater amount of general waste going to landfills and dumpsites can contaminate the surrounding soil with harmful chemicals and contributing to the spread of pests and diseases, making it unsuitable for agriculture or other uses. This can have economic and food security implications.
- Inefficient waste management represents a waste of valuable resources. Materials that could be recycled or repurposed end up in landfills, contributing to resource depletion and increasing the demand for raw materials.
- Organic waste decomposes in landfills and produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. Proper waste management, including composting, can help reduce these emissions.
- Poor waste management often affects marginalised communities disproportionately, leading to social inequities and environmental injustice. Ireland remained heavily reliant on export for the treatment of a number of key waste streams; 27% of biodegradable waste, 39% of municipal waste, 55% of hazardous waste, 50% of packaging waste and almost all WEEE were exported for the final treatment step in 2020. These communities may be more exposed to the negative health and environmental impacts of waste.
- Increasing waste affects the achievement of EU targets and endangers Ireland's circular economy, climate, biodiversity, human health and well-being objectives.

## Plastic-use

There were plastic items used throughout the festival including single-use cable ties, plastic cups, plastic table cloths and decorations. Plastic was also present in the canteen as individual portion food packaging e.g. sauce sachets and jam packets.

Single-use plastics and non-biodegradable products contribute to the global pollution crisis.

- Producing plastic products requires the extraction of fossil fuels (such as oil and natural gas) and consumes a significant amount of energy and water. Reducing plastic consumption can help conserve these non-renewable resources.
- Currently less than 1/3 of plastic in Ireland is recycled (Repak, 2023). As much as 77% of plastic packaging waste was incinerated in Ireland in 2022 (EPA, 2023).
- Plastic waste that is not recycled can end up as litter harmful to ecosystems and wildlife.
- Studies have shown that over 8 million metric tons of plastic enter the oceans each year. This has dire consequences for marine life, with numerous reports of animals ingesting plastic or becoming entangled in plastic waste.
- Plastic's durability means that it can take hundreds of years to decompose, turning into smaller particles called microplastics which can enter the food chain and have potential health consequences for humans and wildlife.







- Plastic's durability means that it can take hundreds of years to decompose, turning into smaller particles called microplastics which can enter the food chain and have potential health consequences for humans and wildlife.
- Plastic is also associated with the leeching of toxic chemicals such as BPA and phthalates. These chemicals have been linked to a range of health issues, including hormonal disruption and developmental problems.

Plastic can have several negative environmental and social impacts, which is why many people and organisations advocate for reducing its use. A list of swaps can be found on [page 41](#).



# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS



Photo credit: Barry Morgan, YTI



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the practices might be easier to implement than others, but all of them will help your organisation improve its social and environmental impacts. By collectively embracing sustainability principles and practices, the National Festival of Youth Theatres can contribute to a greener, more responsible, and enjoyable event for all involved.

## **Draw up a Sustainability Policy**

Sustainability is a shared responsibility. Everyone involved in organising the National Festival of Youth Theatres should take ownership of the role they play in contributing to a sustainable festival. A sustainability policy might include a durability strategy, eliminating single-use plastics, reducing energy consumption, and minimising waste generation.

## **Organise Training**

Working sustainably needs teams to understand thoroughly the drivers for sustainable working, and the principles behind it. Widespread climate literacy and sustainability practices training is recommended if Youth Theatre Ireland wishes to move towards more sustainable operations.

## **Add Sustainability criteria to the Vendor Procurement process**

For already existing suppliers that provide products, find out if sustainable options are available. Make sure to research and check specifications to not fall for greenwashing. When making a product switch, share your reason for it with the supplier. If your supplier doesn't have sustainable options, don't just leave quietly. Take the opportunity to tell them your reason and ask them to let you know when they've improved their product lines. Every conversation will add up to a cumulative message that the suppliers can't ignore. Even if change doesn't happen straight away, remember that having this conversation is better than staying silent on an issue.

## **Incorporate environmental and sustainability education into the core programme.**

Sustainability can enhance the festival's reputation and appeal. Based on the 2023 questionnaire, attendees including young people and leaders really do care about sustainability and want to learn more. Consider the introduction of sustainability-focused workshops for all festival attendees. These workshops could encompass a broad spectrum of sustainability topics, such as general sustainability principles, zero-waste practices, and the art of prop-making using environmentally friendly materials.

## **Make Waste Disposal Fun**

If you notice littering of a particular item, consider providing fun waste disposal solutions, and create branded, experiential binning methods. This could be in the form of a sculpture where plastic bottle lids can be inserted. Alternatively, keep waste that can be reused by others for innovative projects.



Installation made from scrap wood in Germany

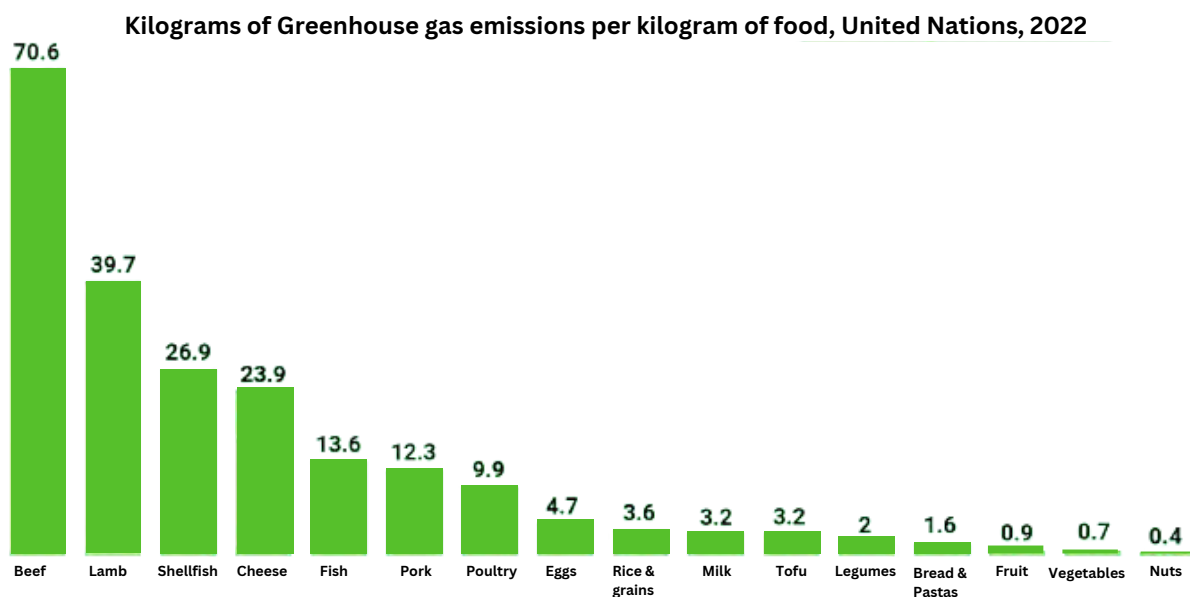


## Request improved waste disposal

Ensure composting, general and recycling bins are clearly labeled to ensure that waste is properly sorted and disposed of.

## Request low-impact meals

Shifting from a high-meat to a low-meat diet can help people to reduce their dietary emissions by a third. These options can include vegetable stir-fries, pasta dishes, grain-based salad bowls with seeds and dressings, bean burritos, lentil curries, chickpea stews, quiches, smoothies or falafel wraps.



## Encourage sustainable travel

Travel can contribute to increased carbon emissions, decreased air quality, and fossil fuel resource depletion. Although you can't directly control it, you can still take action to encourage more sustainable travel. Promote knowledge-sharing on most economical and sustainable transport options, form relationships with transport service providers and encourage conversations between youth theatre leaders. Additionally, engaging audiences with the environmental impacts of their travel can be a first step towards wider adoption of low carbon travel in everyday life. Sustainable travel and transport can also have other benefits like cost savings, healthy lifestyles and reduced pollution.

## Reward Sustainability

Encouraging behavioural change in attendees can be a fun way to promote sustainability and engage attendees. Whenever possible, incentivise and reward participants for behaving in an environmentally friendly way. This is an easy win win situation and will take it a step further from knowledge-based incentives which were utilised through the treasure hunt and quiz.

## Print sustainably

If printing, use recycled paper and ink saving fonts Ryman Eco, Garamond or Courier New. You can save more than 20% of ink by using one of these fonts.

## Make swaps to non-toxic, biodegradable and sustainable alternatives

Swapping to non-toxic, biodegradable and sustainable alternatives materials, such as bioplastics, plant-based packaging, reusable containers, organic, fair trade, local and palm-oil free products, can help to reduce pollution, conserve resources, reduce exposure to harmful chemicals, support equality and fuel the local economy.

## Palm oil-free or certified palm oil products

If you decide to offer food made with palm oil, it's essential to consider the source and sustainability of the palm oil used. Look for products that carry sustainable production certifications like the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), which sets standards for sustainable palm oil production. Some examples include Lotus Biscoff biscuits, Tayto, Dove's farm, Biona and Island Bakery. Additionally, offering treats made with other types of oils (e.g., sunflower oil, rapeseed oil) or promoting palm oil-free products can be a more environmentally and ethically responsible choice. Remember all oils have an impact, so it's crucial to familiarise yourself with sustainable options and communicate your choices to your audience and stakeholders to demonstrate your commitment to sustainability and responsible sourcing.

## Support Irish brands

Purchasing from Irish brands stimulates the local economy, reduces the carbon footprint and can potentially connect people with Irish ingredients and cultural traditions. Below are some Irish brands and how they perform in terms of sustainability.

	Palm oil-free	Vegan	Gluten-free	Plastic-free
Jo's Absolute Nutrition	✓	✓	✓	✗
Good4u	✓	✓	✓	✗
Broderick's	✗	✗	✓	✗
All Real Nutrition	✓	✗	✓	✓
Foods of Athenry	✗	✓	✓	✗
Skellig's	✗	✓	✓	✗
Keogh's (carbon neutral)	✓	✓	✓	✗
Tayto	✗	✓	✓	✗

## Avoid the following biscuit brands

In order of decreasing sustainability: Walkers Shortbread, Lidl Tower Gate, Waitrose, Aldi, Jacob's, Marks and Spencer, McVitie's, Penguin, Spar, Fox's, Jammie Dodgers, Ryvita, Cadbury, Oreo, Ritz, Tuc, Tesco. This list is not exhaustive.

## Choose Fairtrade and organic brands

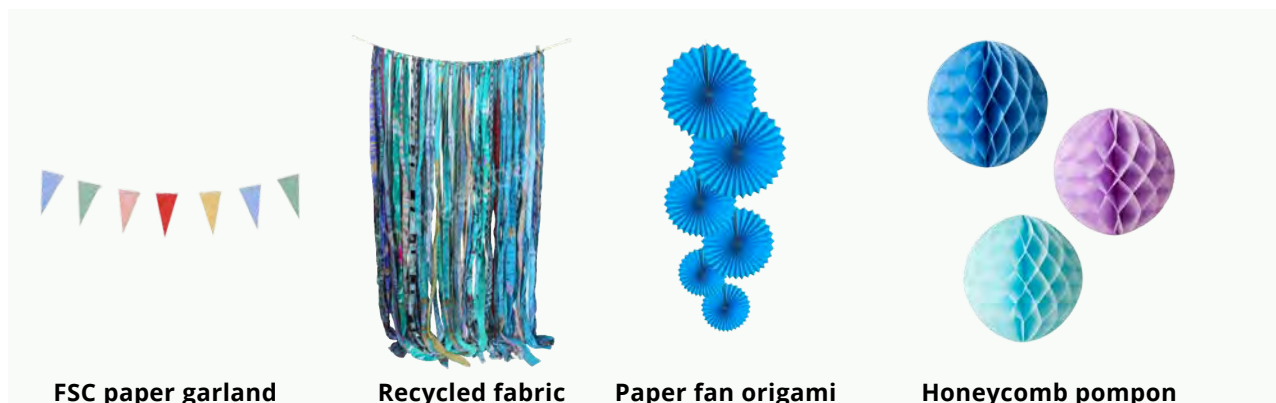
- Tony's Chocoloney (fairtrade, plastic-free, palm oil-free, recycled FSC-certified paper, vegan options).
- Vego (fairtrade, vegan, plastic-free, palm oil-free, organic).
- Green & Black's (fairtrade, organic, vegan options)

\*(the information above is correct as of 2023).\*

Unsustainable decisions are often made under time pressure and due to lack of planning. Give yourself plenty of time to research sustainable options and consider the lifecycle and longevity of items you're about to purchase.

### **Use decor made from recycled materials**

Consider using decor and props made from recycled or upcycled materials to enhance the sustainability of your event's decorations. Decor made from recycled materials not only reduces waste but also showcases creative and eco-friendly design. It serves as a visual reminder of your commitment to sustainability.



### **Use paper tape**

Paper is made from wood pulp, which is a renewable resource when sourced responsibly from sustainably managed forests. Paper tape is typically biodegradable and can break down naturally over time, reducing its impact on landfills and the environment. By using paper tape instead of plastic tape, you reduce the demand for petroleum-based plastics, which are associated with environmental concerns.

### **Distribute reusable water bottles**

Promote the use of reusable water bottles among attendees. Encourage them to refill their bottles at designated water stations throughout the event to help reduce the consumption of single-use plastic water bottles, which often end up in landfills or as litter. This initiative not only reduces waste but also promotes responsible hydration practices.

### **Buy in bulk**

Reduce the amount of plastic packaging by buying snacks, condiments and beverages in bulk and avoiding individually wrapped items. This will lead to cost savings and minimise the amount of plastic packaging waste associated with individually wrapped items.

### **Create a circular loop**

One person's trash is another person's treasure. Implement a circular economy approach by repurposing or recycling event materials. A circular loop minimises waste generation and extends the lifespan of materials.





Sustainable decor by CatchMyParty

### Swap to reusable cable ties.

Consider replacing single-use and non-recyclable plastic cable ties with reusable and biodegradable alternatives. Reusable cable ties look the same as its non-sustainable counterpart but have an additional quick release mechanism that allows them to be reopened and reused. Natural Biodegradable cable are Ideal for use in temporary events due to the degrading nature of these ties. Expected minimum time of 2 years to degrade, depending on the conditions under which they are stored or used. Reusable and biodegradable cable ties not only help reduce plastic waste but also save money in the long run. They are versatile and can be used for various purposes, making them a sustainable choice for events.



### Provide compostable cups or keep cups

Consider the use of compostable cups or reusable "keep cups" at your festival. Compostable cups are made from eco-friendly materials that can break down in composting facilities, while keep cups are designed for multiple uses.



### Share the story of how you're greening your event

Actively communicate your sustainability efforts with attendees, funders, and the public. Share your sustainability journey through social media, event materials, and presentations. Sharing your sustainability story raises awareness and engagement among stakeholders. It showcases your commitment to eco-friendly practices and can inspire others to follow suit in their events and daily lives.

### Consider carbon offsetting

Investing in carbon offset projects can reduce the negative impact of the festival.

### Collect Data and Report on Sustainability

Continue to track and report on sustainability metrics, such as energy, waste diversion rates, and carbon emissions. Sharing the festival's sustainability performance with festivalgoers.



**“YOUTH THEATRE  
IRELAND HAS THE  
OPPORTUNITY TO  
LEAD. THE  
NATIONAL  
FESTIVAL OF  
YOUTH THEATRES  
CAN BECOME THE  
EXEMPLAR OF  
GREEN  
PRACTICES AND  
SUPPORT OTHER  
YOUTH THEATRES  
TO INTERWEAVE  
SUSTAINABILITY  
INTO THEIR  
WORK.”**

**ALEX KONIECZKA  
UNDERSTORY FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR**



Photo credit: Barry Morgan, YTI



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Photo credit: Barry Morgan, YTI

# THE SDG FRAMEWORK

The SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) are a set of 17 global goals established by the United Nations to address a wide range of social, economic, and environmental challenges facing the world. These goals provide a framework for creating a more sustainable and equitable future for all.



**Incorporating the SDGs into a youth theatre festival's themes, content, and discussions can elevate the festival's impact and help shape the perspectives and actions of young participants and audiences in alignment with the global sustainability agenda.**

Here's how the SDGs are relevant to a youth theatre festival:

- 1. Awareness and Education:** Many of the SDGs are related to issues that can be addressed through education and awareness campaigns. A youth theatre festival can create performances, workshops, and discussions that educate participants and audiences about the different goals, helping to raise awareness about global challenges and the role everyone can play in addressing them.
- 2. Artistic Expression:** Each SDG encompasses a variety of topics, such as poverty, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, climate action, and more. These topics can serve as powerful sources of inspiration for creative storytelling, allowing youth participants to express their thoughts, emotions, and perspectives on these critical issues through theatre performances.

3. **Advocacy and Activism:** Youth theatre festivals can serve as platforms for advocacy and activism. By creating performances that shed light on specific SDGs and related challenges, participants can use their artistic talents to advocate for positive change and encourage action on a local, national, or even global scale.
4. **Behavioural Change:** The SDGs often call for changes in individual and collective behaviour to achieve sustainable outcomes. A youth theatre festival can influence the attitudes and behaviors of its participants and audiences by promoting messages aligned with the SDGs, ultimately contributing to more sustainable lifestyles and choices.
5. **Community Engagement:** Many of the SDGs require collaborative efforts and community engagement to be successful. Youth theatre festivals can foster community connections by involving local organisations, businesses, governments, and residents in discussions and actions related to the SDGs.
6. **Inspiration and Empowerment:** The SDGs emphasise the importance of leaving no one behind and empowering all individuals to contribute to a sustainable future. A youth theatre festival can empower young participants to take ownership of the SDGs, enabling them to see themselves as agents of change and contributors to a better world.
7. **Global Perspective:** The SDGs are universal goals that apply to all countries and communities. Incorporating the SDGs into a youth theatre festival encourages young people to think beyond their immediate surroundings and consider the interconnectedness of global challenges and solutions.
8. **Measurement and Reporting:** The SDGs come with indicators and targets to measure progress. A youth theatre festival that aligns with specific SDGs can contribute to the monitoring and reporting efforts by showcasing how it addresses relevant issues through its activities.
9. **Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** Achieving the SDGs requires collaboration between governments, businesses, civil society, and individuals. A youth theatre festival can serve as a platform for these diverse stakeholders to come together, share insights, and work toward common goals.
10. **Long-Term Impact:** By incorporating SDGs into its programming, a youth theatre festival can contribute to the long-term development of responsible and engaged citizens who are committed to creating a sustainable and just world.



# SUSTAINABLE FESTIVAL MANAGEMENT

cial Area



# SUSTAINABLE FESTIVAL GUIDE

Organising a sustainable festival of youth theatres is not only environmentally responsible but can also enhance the overall experience for participants and attendees. This guide provides a step-by-step approach to help you plan and execute a youth theatre festival with a strong focus on sustainability. You have already successfully accomplished some of these steps!

## 1. Establish Your Sustainability Goals:

- Define clear sustainability objectives for the festival, such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and community engagement.
- Set measurable targets to track progress, such as reducing single-use plastic by a certain percentage.

## 2. Create a Sustainability Committee:

- Form a dedicated team responsible for overseeing and implementing sustainability initiatives.
- Ensure representation from various stakeholder groups, including event organisers, youth theatre groups, and local environmental experts.

## 3. Venue Selection and Design:

- Choose a venue with sustainability in mind, considering factors such as accessibility by public transport, water-saving measures, energy efficiency, and waste management facilities.
- Make requests and recommendations to the venue to ensure your sustainability goals are not compromised.
- Plan the festival layout to minimise energy consumption and optimise waste collection points.

## 4. Waste Management:

- Develop waste diversion strategies.
- Provide clearly marked recycling and composting bins throughout the venue and educate participants and attendees on proper waste disposal.
- Continue to avoid using non-biodegradable material e.g. glitter, balloons.

## 5. Sustainable Transportation:

- Encourage the use of public transportation, biking, or carpooling to reduce the carbon footprint of attendees.
- Offer incentives, such as discounts or rewards, to participants and attendees who choose sustainable transportation options.

#### 6. Sustainable Food and Beverage Options:

- Collaborate with local food vendors who prioritise sustainable and organic ingredients.
- Minimise single-use plastics and encourage the use of reusable or compostable food and drink containers and utensils.

#### 7. Eco-Friendly Merchandise:

- Offer merchandise made from sustainable materials or provide attendees with reusable festival swag like water bottles or tote bags.
- Avoid waste by accurately estimating demand.

#### 8. Community Engagement:

- Partner with local environmental organisations to host educational workshops and activities related to sustainability and theatre.
- Involve youth theatre groups in sustainability projects or performances that raise awareness about environmental issues.

#### 9. Measurement and Reporting:

- Regularly track and measure progress toward your sustainability goals.
- Share your achievements and challenges with attendees, participants, and stakeholders through sustainability reports or updates on your event's website and social media.

#### 10. Continual Improvement:

- Collect feedback from participants and attendees on their sustainability experiences and use this input to make improvements for future festivals.
- Stay updated on the latest sustainable practices and technologies to continuously enhance the event's environmental impact.

#### 11. Transparency and Communication:

- Clearly communicate your sustainability efforts to participants and attendees through various channels, including event programs, signage, and online platforms.
- Encourage attendees to take part in sustainability initiatives and share their own ideas and actions.

By following these steps and continually prioritising sustainability, the festival can not only reduce its environmental impact but also inspire others to become more sustainable.



# MEASURING PROGRESS

**Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Performance goals are a good way to monitor and measure progress. Define specific KPIs related to your new sustainability goals. Reporting performance can include details such as indicators identified, data collected and SDG-related activities accomplished. These should be 1) relevant to the recommendations made in this report 2) clear and concrete to make it easier to generate relevant and 3) consistent and comparable data over time, in formats that your audience can understand and appreciate. For example, you could set KPIs for reducing energy consumption, waste generation, or carbon emissions. It is advisable at the very start to use a framework for setting sustainable objectives such as SMART objectives.

**S - Specific**

**M - Measurable**

**A - Achievable**

**R - Relevant**

**T - Timed**

**SMART Objective Example: “To eliminate the use of single-use plastic at The National Festival of Youth Theatres by 2025.”**

**Use a Baseline Assessment:** Use the results of this audit report as a baseline assessment to establish a starting point for each KPI. This baseline will serve as a reference point for evaluating progress.

**Regular Monitoring:** Implement a regular monitoring system to track ongoing progress. This may involve monthly, quarterly, or annual data collection and analysis. Use this data to assess whether you're meeting your sustainability targets.

**Sustainability Reports:** Create sustainability reports that summarize your organisation's progress. Include data on energy consumption, waste reduction, and other relevant metrics. These reports can be shared with stakeholders, including staff, participants, and supporters.

A template is available in the Appendix.

# NEXT STEPS





# YOUR NEXT FIVE STEPS

## **Step 1: Work with a sustainability impact agency!\***

Understory is here to help you work out exactly what is important to you and your festival - from reducing waste to increasing your charitable impact - so you have a clear action plan for how to achieve your goals. Impact agencies will help you baseline your current efforts; devise innovative new strategies; and coordinate key stakeholders.

## **Step 2: Continue learning about Sustainability**

Work with Understory to organise training for staff and incorporate Sustainability into the programme of The National Festival of Youth Theatres 2024.

## **Step 3: Create a Sustainability policy**

You've taken the time to really consider what actions you can take to make your festival the best it can be, but now comes the hard part of actually putting words into practice. Be thorough and work to incorporate your initiatives into the early planning stages. Establish objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress. Your colleagues and supply chain will find it easier to adopt your initiatives if they are given time to work them into their own plans for the year.

## **Step 4: Commit to your policy!**

Making a difference requires dedication. Once you've picked your key policies to focus on, embed them into all your activities. For example, if a policy is to eliminate single use plastic bottles then you need to ensure that's the case across site - artists, site crew, suppliers, and traders must use aluminium cans, cardboard cartons or their own bottles for water, it can't just be the festival goers who eliminate plastic. Consistency and commitment is key.

## **Step 5: Communicate your impacts**

Great! You have created your sustainability impact policy! But no one knows about it, not even your own team. Getting your stakeholders on board is essential; consider how you communicate your policy differently to your audience versus your Board of Directors, as they'll likely be motivated by different things. And don't forget to capitalise on your assets! This could be an active audience or beautiful surroundings; whatever it is, make sure you use it in your impact campaign.

\*Shameless self-plug



# APPENDIX



# RESOURCES

## Online training

- E-Learning - The Carbon Literacy Project <https://carbonliteracy.com>  
<https://carbonliteracy.com/organisation/e-learning>

## Carbon Literacy Training in Business

- Virtual College [virtual-college.co.uk](http://www.virtual-college.co.uk) <http://www.virtual-college.co.uk/courses/compliance/carbon-literacy/>

## Eco-friendly Materials

- <https://www.stuffincycles.com/en/materialien/>

## Online Carbon Footprint Calculator

- <https://www.carbonfootprint.com/>

## Venue Sustainability Checklist

- Are there suitable waste disposal amenities including recycling and composting?
- Is there an adequate supply of electric voltage? Is there solar power?
- Does the venue have their own checklist and rules on sustainability?
- Does the venue avoid single-use plastics or would they support a single-use plastic-free event?
- Does the chosen venue or vendor accentuate your sustainability ethos overall?

## Vendor/Supplier Sustainability Checklist

- Does the vendor have their own policies on sustainability, environment, social responsibility, health and safety and/or sustainable procurement/purchasing?
- Are the products offered made from alternative materials that are sustainably sourced?
- Is there transparency of the supply chain?
- Do products have any environmental or social features or benefits (e.g. environmental/energy certification, ecolabels, fair trade certification, etc.)?
- Does the chosen vendor accentuate your sustainability ethos overall?
- Is packaging used sustainable and plastic-free?
- Can products be re-used or disposed of easily in an environmentally safe way?
- Does the vendor have a return scheme?
- Is the vendor a fair and ethical employer?

**You may wish to use the above as a conversation starter or create a venue/supplier self-assessment form.**

## Sustainability strategic plan worksheet

Key Indicator	Activity / Project	Data / Outcome
Your Key Performance Indicator goes here	Add a few details describing the related activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What results do you want to obtain?</li> <li>• What data will you collect?</li> </ul>



## Sustainability strategic plan worksheet

### Vision

What is your vision in terms of sustainability? This is the big picture reflecting what the festival could look like in terms of sustainability.

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### Mission

What is your festival's mission in terms of sustainability? This will help you achieve your vision, e.g., "To become a 100% locally-sourced festival."

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### Values

What are your festival's values? Is sustainability one of your core values? How does your festival embody these values? What do they look like in practice?

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### Policies

What sustainability policies do you have in place? In addition, what policies do you need to put in place? For those that still need to be developed, who will do this, and when does it need to be completed?

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### Objectives

What are the SMART Objectives for your festival's sustainably goals? Remember to make your objectives Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timed (SMART).

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Alex hosting the sustainability section of The National Youth Theatre Quiz



National Festival of Youth Theatres Group photo



Winners of the prize draw for filling out the Behaviour and Attitudes Survey



Sustainability Champion certificate ceremony



## CONTACT US

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[www.facebook.com/understory.ie](https://www.facebook.com/understory.ie)

[www.tiktok.com/understory\\_ie](https://www.tiktok.com/understory_ie)  
[www.linkedin.com/company/understoryie/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/understoryie/)  
[www.youtube.com/@understory\\_ie7703](https://www.youtube.com/@understory_ie7703)