

# SUSTAINABLE BELFAST

Visit Belfast Sustainability  
Strategy & Action Plan

Annual progress report  
June 2022

visitBelfast



Belfast  
City Council



# Our Policy

## 1. Our Organisation

- Reduce the environmental impact of our business and look for better, greener and more sustainable ways of working
- Build sustainability capacity within Visit Belfast and empower our employees
- Support and improve employee health and wellbeing
- Procure goods and services more sustainably
- Maximise the social and economic impacts of Visit Belfast's activities – to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth

## 2. Our Industry

- Champion sustainability within our industry – encouraging collaboration, catalysing innovation and improvement

## 3. Our Visitors and Clients

- Promote sustainable choices and experiences and positively influence the actions of visitors
- Work with our B2B clients (event organisers, tour operators and cruise lines) to make sustainable business easy

## 4. Our City

- Generate and manage year-round visitors to Belfast in a way which is sensitive to the environment and communities
- Promote Belfast as an accessible, inclusive and sustainable destination for all



# Our Organisation



## What we are doing

## Where we are going

## What we are measuring & reporting

Reduce the environmental impact of our business and look for better, greener and more sustainable ways of working. Procure goods and services more sustainably

- We have updated Visit Belfast's procurement policy and sustainability is now included in all new procurement processes
- We measure our waste, energy and travel annually
- We are a certified business and have secured a Green Tourism Award (Bronze)
- We consider sustainability impact across all operational decisions this includes:
  - Eliminating single use items and reusing resources where possible
  - Zero food waste at VB events/meetings
  - 100% recycled paper across all VB publications
  - Utilizing digital platforms

- We will increase our sustainability performance to achieve a Green Tourism Silver Award in 2023
- We will measure the carbon impact of our organisation and develop a carbon reduction roadmap and action plan in 23-24

- We are measuring and reporting our sustainability performance annually through the Green Tourism certification process which is an independent third party assessment.

Build sustainability capacity within Visit Belfast. Support and improve employee health and wellbeing.

- All Visit Belfast staff are trained in sustainability and it is included in the induction process for new joiners
- We have created a company-wide sustainability team which meets bi-monthly to progress our sustainability plans
- We have created a new sustainability and impact manager position within Visit Belfast
- We have increased flexibility in working hours for staff and introduced Hybrid working 3 days per week for office staff
- To support active travel we have introduced a cycle to work scheme

- We are developing a new 3 year people strategy with a focus on wellness, engagement and sustainability.
- We will prioritize sustainability in all staff training and development plans
- We will work with our Board and funders to undertake a cost of living salary review in 22-23
- We are exploring schemes to incentivise public transport use by staff

- We will publish our sustainability and impact report annually
- We will report on progress against our people strategy to our Board annually

**Green  
Tourism**  
BRONZE AWARD

**100%**  
Staff trained

# Our Organisation



What we are doing

Where we are going

What we are measuring & reporting

## Maximise the economic and social impact of Visit Belfast's activities

### Economic impact

- We generated over **£84m** in economic impact as a result of Visit Belfast's activities in 21-22, playing a key role in supporting tourism recovery post COVID
- We supported **416** tourism businesses during 21-22 through Visit Belfast partnership

### Social impact

- We provided a crucial city information service during the pandemic and serviced over **263k enquires** from residents and visitors
- **38** of Visit Belfast partners are not for profit / social enterprise or charitable organisations
- We have 7 active Visit Belfast volunteers that have generated **250 Volunteer hours**
- Our staff raised **£2,200** for charitable causes in 22-23
- We provide a subsidized city box office and ticketing service to support local cultural organisations and events and generated **£774k** in ticket sales
- 16 conferences coming into Belfast in 2022 will have a legacy/impact plan
- We have **10 CSR initiatives** that inbound conferences can support: Group Now, Colin Glen Trust, Restorify, National Trust, Woodland Trust, Ulster Wildlife, NI hospice, Another world Belfast and Keep NI beautiful.

- We will increase our economic impact to **£97m** in 2022-23
- We will increase the number of social enterprise, charity, not for profit, community/ neighbourhood tourism partners represented by Visit Belfast in 22-23
- We will increase our volunteers to **15** in 22-23
- We will increase our **volunteer hours to 400** in 22-23
- Our ambition is to have every inbound conference to Belfast commit to a legacy goal by 2024
- We are launching a fundraising initiative to tackle food waste in business events which will help increase food donations to local charities and raise vital funds for local residents experiencing food insecurity and food poverty. We aim to generate **£10,000** in donations for local food banks in Belfast in 22-23

- Economic impact
- Volunteering hours
- Numbers of volunteers
- Funds raised for social / charitable causes
- Number of community, charity and social enterprises as partners of Visit Belfast
- Impact and legacy outcomes from business events

**£84m**  
Economic Impact

**263k**  
Enquiries

**416**  
Businesses

**10**  
CSR Initiatives

**250**  
Volunteer Hrs



# Our Industry



## What we are doing

## Where we are going

## What we are measuring & reporting

Champion sustainability within our industry – encouraging collaboration, catalyzing innovation and improvement

- We have launched the largest Green Tourism partnership with a city, funded by Belfast City Council and delivered by Visit Belfast to accelerate the sustainability performance of our tourism partners in Belfast.
- We have increased the number of tourism partners committed to sustainable certification by Green Tourism from **6 to 83 businesses**
- **12** businesses now certified
- We have hosted **7 sustainability webinars** for industry partners during 22-23 in partnership with Green Tourism and GDS
- We were awarded the ABPCO (Association of British Professional Conference Organisers) **Excellence Award for CSR** in recognition of our work to accelerate sustainability performance in our industry.
- We have participated in Visit Britain, BCC, GDS, ABPCO, Meeting Show and All-Ireland sustainability forums to champion sustainability and encourage collaboration
- We increased **supplier scores** in the annual GDS Index from **30% in 2020** to **41.3%** which benchmarks our performance against 73 global cities

- We aim to have **100** tourism businesses committed to Green Tourism certification by 2030
- We will work with **75** businesses to complete their certification process and achieve a Green Tourism Award by June 2023
- **90%** of hotel bedrooms in Belfast to be sustainably certified by 22-23
- We will work with city stakeholders to establish a tourism sustainability taskforce in 2022

- Number of certified tourism businesses in Belfast
- % of hotel bedrooms that are sustainably certified
- Annual GDS supplier sustainability scores
- Positive action and best practice being taken by our industry

90%

Hotel bedrooms  
certified in 2023

83

Green Tourism  
Businesses  
registered  
(+76 YoY)



41%

GDS supplier  
score  
(+11% YoY)

# Our Visitors & Clients



## What we are doing

## Where we are going

## What we are measuring & reporting

Promote sustainable choices and experiences & positively influence the actions of visitors and clients (event organisers, cruise lines and tour operators)

- We have introduced sustainability surveys across our VIC sites to track attitudes towards sustainability and positively influence the actions of visitors and clients
- **76%** of visitors are interested in sustainability
- **66%** of visitors would like to experience local produce, local gifts and local experiences in 21-22
- Visitors interested in supporting local projects and communities increased from **28% to 48%**
- Visitors interested in reducing the environmental impact of their visit increased from **32% to 49%**
- We have developed a sustainable events framework and resource guide for all inbound event organisers coming to Belfast
- **20 conferences** coming to Belfast in 2022 have committed to a sustainability goal
- We have created **14 sustainability blogs** on Visit Belfast and Meetbelfast.com from green stays to vegan restaurants and active travel to promote and encourage sustainable choices
- We promote **10 CSR/volunteering** initiatives for event organisers and tour operators to support as part of their visit to Belfast
- We have launched a food waste resource guide for event organisers, hotels and restaurants on stop food waste day,
- **302 trees planted** by Visit Belfast clients

- We will work with BCC and TNI to develop and promote sustainable experiences and itineraries
- We will develop a cruise sustainability plan in 22-23 in partnership with Belfast Harbour and GDS
- We will support TNI/BCC to measure the carbon footprint of the destination and tourism/hospitality industry in Northern Ireland and support reduction action plans by 2023

- We will track visitor attitudes and preferences around sustainability to inform sustainability plans and initiatives
- The impact of our interventions
- Carbon impact of our industry and reduction roadmap by 2023

**76%**  
Visitors interested  
in sustainability

**20**  
Conferences with  
sustainability goal

**302**  
Trees planted

## What we are doing

## Where we are going

## What we are measuring & reporting

Generate and manage year-round visitors to Belfast in a way which is sensitive to the environment and communities

- We have a tourism barometer to track capacity in the city and incoming visitors across conferences, cruise calls and leisure visitors
- **83%** of conferences in 2022 are midweek and **48%** take place in the shoulder season (Jan-Mar / Sept-Nov)
- **37%** of VB visitor enquiries are for regional destinations outside of Belfast
- We are working to influence visitors to extend their stay - **56%** said that their visit to BWC would encourage them to stay longer
- We have worked with cruise lines and National trust to support visitor management during the cruise season
- Our marketing campaigns and sales activity targets gaps in the city calendar and avoid peak capacity months
- We make our annual business plan available publically
- We have increased Belfast's sustainability performance score from **41.9%** to **70.7%** in 2021
- Belfast is now ranked **19<sup>th</sup> in the world** across 73 global cities
- Two community partnership organisations are represented on our Board
- BCC has consulted with residents on the development of its 10 year tourism action plan 'make yourself at home'

- We will host at least two events focused on neighbourhood tourism during 22-23
- We will develop a neighbourhood working/cluster group 22-23
- We will work with BCC to start to survey residents to monitor tourism satisfaction and impacts in 22-23

- We will assess destination sustainability performance annually through the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index
- Resident attitudes towards tourism
- NI-wide enquiries and impact from tourism
- Community/neighbourhood tourism impact
- Seasonality of tourism



**70.7%**  
GDS Index  
Score  
(+28% YoY)

**37%**  
Visit Belfast  
visitor enquiries  
are NI wide

**83%**  
Conferences  
are midweek in  
2022



## What we are doing

## Where we are going

## What we are measuring & reporting

Promote Belfast as an accessible, inclusive and sustainable destination for all

### Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

- We are undertaking an **accessibility audit** of our Belfast welcome centre and will put in place an improvement plan for 22-23
- **100%** of VB staff have received inclusion training
- **100%** of our core VIC staff are JAM card trained
- We have developed **inclusion training** for all Visit Belfast staff and front of house hospitality and tourism staff as a legacy of the Harkin summit 2022 in partnership with Disability Action and Now Group as a legacy of the summit – **258** hospitality professionals have completed it
- We provide advice and support to visitors, event organisers and tour operators on [accessible venues, hotels and attractions across Belfast](#)
- Our welcome centre has an [access guide](#) and is enabled with Hearing loop functionality
- Our website has ReciteMe functionality
- Reflecting the diversity of Belfast as a city, Visit Belfast will promotes attractions, events and activities for the LGBTQI+ community, supporting the Belfast Agenda vision of a city that is “welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive for all”
- We are a **‘Friend of Mela’ for 2022** - Northern Ireland’s biggest authentic celebration of cultural diversity and work for promote culture and diversity within our company and across our marketing, communications and visitor servicing

- **100%** of staff to be trained in equality and diversity in 22-23
- **300** tourism/hospitality professionals to complete the inclusion training developed by VB & Now Group’ for the Harkin summit in 2022
- We will develop a DEI action plan for Visit Belfast in 2023

- Staff DEI training
- Accessibility performance and improvement plan
- DEI action plan and performance

258

Inclusion trained staff across the industry

100%

VB staff inclusion trained





# SUSTAINABLE BELFAST

Examples of our work in  
action

June 2022

visitBelfast



Belfast  
City Council

# Belfast



# In Action: Food Waste Resource Guide

- To coincide with 'Stop Food Waste Day' Visit Belfast collated a [food waste resource](#) guide aimed at event organisers, hotels and restaurants. This included free resources such as:
- Food waste and carbon calculator (Guardians of Grub)
- Starter guide for businesses and tracking tool (Guardians of Grub)
- Belfast food donation options
- Ideas for reducing food waste at events
- Case studies

The guide was promoted on VB social channels and issued to all event organisers, hotels and restaurants on the 2022 'Stop food waste day'



## Resource Guide - Tackling Food Waste

Approximately one third of food produced globally is wasted (source: UN's Food and Agriculture Organization FAO). Food waste is a huge contributor to climate change, responsible for 8% of global greenhouse gases. Producing food takes a huge amount of water, land, energy and other resources which drives climate changes and affects us all. The good news is that by taking action to reduce avoidable food waste we can save money and have a big impact on our planet. We have created this food waste resource guide to help hotels, restaurants and event organisers with practical tips on what we can do to reduce food waste.



How Much Could You Save?



Benefits of Reducing Food Waste



# In Action: Sustainable Choices

[Sustainable Belfast](#)

[Belfast Visitor Pass](#)

[Green Attractions](#)

[Sustainable Travel in Belfast and Beyond](#)

[Sustainable Shopping](#)

[Belfast Businesses with Online Shopping](#)

[Top Vegetarian & Vegan Restaurants](#)

[Green Tourism](#)

[Green Attractions - NI](#)

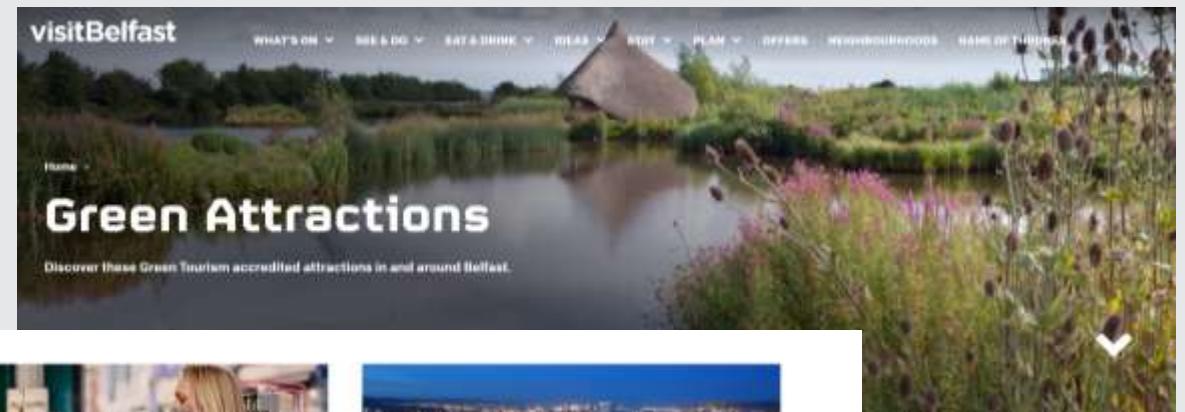
[Green Stays](#)

[Green Restaurants](#)

[Enjoy the amazing outdoors](#)

[Independent Shops in Belfast](#)

[Get Active](#)



## Get Active

Be a champion of health and wellbeing by incorporating an active element to your conference or social program.

[READ MORE](#)



## Sustainable Shopping

Discover the brands in Belfast city centre that are committed to sustainability, reducing environmental impact and providing eco-friendly products.

[READ MORE](#)



## Inclusive Welcome

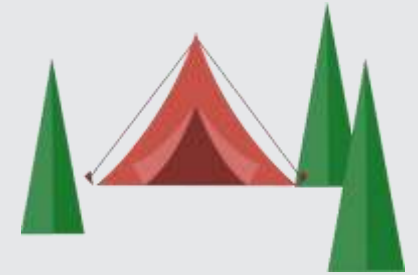
Ensuring a warm welcome for all, Visit Belfast offer advice on accessibility and inclusivity during your event.

[READ MORE](#)



# In Action: Green Tourism Scheme

Partnership and Accreditation Update – May 2022



## HOTELS

Maldron Hotel Belfast City  
Maldron Hotel BIA  
Galgorm  
Jurys Inn  
Radisson Blu  
Clayton Hotel  
Strangford Arms Hotel  
The Fitzwilliam Hotel Belfast  
The Merchant Hotel  
Bullitt Hotel  
Titanic Hotel Belfast  
ETAP Hotel Belfast  
Holiday Inn Belfast City Centre  
Europa Hotel  
Grand Central Hotel  
Hilton Belfast  
Hampton by Hilton Belfast City Centre  
Holiday Inn Express Belfast  
Ibis Belfast City Centre  
Ibis Belfast Queen's Quarter  
Cordia Serviced Apartments  
Ramada by Wyndham Belfast  
Stormont Hotel  
AC Hotel Belfast  
The Malone  
Ten Square Hotel  
Crowne Plaza Hotel  
The Harrison

**GOLD**  
**GOLD**  
**SILVER**  
**SILVER**  
**SILVER**  
**BRONZE**  
**BRONZE**  
**BRONZE**

## ATTRACTIONS & EXPERIENCES

Belfast Zoo  
DC Tours  
Castle Espie Wildfowl & Wetlands  
Ark Open Farm  
Ards Art Centre  
  
Colin Glen Trust  
Aunt Sandra's Candy Factory  
The Lost City Adventure Golf  
Discover Ulster Scots Agency  
EastSide Visitor Centre  
Eazy Riderz Ltd  
Ulster Museum  
The Belfast Gin and Spirits School Ltd  
St George's Market  
Titanic Belfast  
Smithfield Market  
W5  
Linen Hall Library  
Áras Uí Chonghaile  
Belfastology Walking Tours  
Taste and Tour NI  
Belfast Hidden Tours  
Irish Tour Tickets  
Belfast City Sightseeing Ltd  
City Tours Belfast  
Crumlin Road Gaol

**SILVER**  
**SILVER**  
**SILVER**  
**BRONZE**  
**BRONZE**

## RESTAURANTS, BARS AND RETAIL

Café Parisien  
Fratelli Belfast  
Margot  
Fountain Lane  
Henrys  
Pug Uglys  
The Jailhouse  
Whites Tavern & The Oyster Rooms  
On the Square Emporium

## VENUES

ICC Belfast  
Queen's University Belfast  
  
Assembly Buildings  
Belfast Metropolitan College  
Stranmillis University College  
Queen's University Belfast  
Ulster Hall  
Black Box  
QFT  
Lyric Theatre  
Clifton House Conference Centre

**SILVER**  
**GOLD**

## EVENTS

Bespoke Business Events  
Event-ful  
Northern Ireland Science Festival  
Young at Art  
Belfast City Marathon Ltd

## TRANSPORT

George Best Belfast City Airport  
Translink





# In Action: CSR & Volunteering

Missions ▾ Trees ▾ **restorify**

**COLÁISTE FEIRSTE – BELFAST ONE MILLION TREES**

BELFAST, ANTRIM



Belfast City Council is organising this mission.

