

Sustainability Action Plan Performance and Impact report 2022-2023

**visit
Belfast**

June 2023



Introduction

Visit Belfast's business plan 'Rebuilding City Tourism 2021-24' set out an ambitious new direction of travel for our marketing and destination management, placing sustainability and community at the very heart of Belfast's tourism recovery.

To support delivery of this strategy, we launched Visit Belfast's sustainability policy in 2021 setting out our 10 commitments to guide our sustainability journey. Aligned to 8 of the 17 UN SDG's; these commitments focus on the positive role that we can play as the city's destination marketing and management organisation to drive inclusive and sustainable growth.

The collaborative efforts led by Visit Belfast, Belfast City Council and our industry partners to accelerate sustainability performance have transformed Belfast's position from a laggard to leader in just two years.

This 2023 impact report charts our tremendous progress during the 22-23 financial year and sets out our priorities for the 23-24 period.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gerry Lennon".

Gerry Lennon
Chief Executive
Visit Belfast



22-23

Highlights

Visit Belfast and Belfast City Council joined the Global Destinations Sustainability Index in 2020 as one of the Belfast resilience strategy's 30 transformational programmes. With a ranking of 47th / 48th globally and an overall score of 41%, there was significant work to be done.

Today Belfast is ranked 8th / 73 destinations globally with overall score of 84% in the Global Destinations Sustainability Index (GDS 2022). It is the only destination on the island of Ireland and one of two cities in the UK to make the Top 10 position.

Key achievements include:

- 81% of Belfast Hotel bedrooms now hold a sustainability certification - up significantly from 25% prior year. This has been a remarkable achievement driven by the Green Tourism programme led by Visit Belfast and Belfast City Council with support and commitment from the hotel sector across the city.
- Supplier performance was 73% in 2022 with a significant increase from 41% prior year. (GDS Index)
- Destination management scores increased to 93% in 2022 from 75% (GDS Index)
- Development of Visit Belfast's award-winning social impact initiative 'Changing the Menu. For Good' to help tackle food poverty in Belfast through business events.
- 700 volunteer hours delivered - up from 250 (21-22)
- £22,115 funds raised - up from £2,200 (21-22) and £12k ahead of target for the year
- £110m in economic impact generated (+14% ahead of target) and £26m ahead of 21-22.





Our Commitments

Our 10 policy commitments are aligned to 8 of the UN SDGs and guide our sustainability plans across four areas:

- Our Organisation
- Our Industry
- Our Visitors and Clients
- Our City



Our Organisation

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

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



Our Visitors & Clients

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



Our City

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

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





**CHANGING
THE MENU.
FOR GOOD.**

Served by **visitBelfast**

Our Organisation

Our Organisation

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



Our actions

In 22-23 we have:

- Baselined our 22-23 energy consumption and associated carbon footprint - 63.95 tonnes CO₂e
- Baselined our annual staff travel and associated carbon footprint - 43.36 tonnes CO₂e (22-23)
- Digitised our Cruise Belfast 'What's On' Guide
- Launched a sustainable T-Shirt range in our Visit Belfast Welcome Centre
- Increased the number of locally sourced retail lines
- Our procurement policy has been updated to include sustainability and it is now a key consideration in all relevant procurement decisions
- Crucially, we have created a culture of sustainability across our organisation where it underpins how we do things.

In 2022 Visit Belfast was the 3rd highest performing DMMO in the Global Destination Sustainability index, the world's leading sustainability performance improvement and benchmarking programme for destinations.



93%



Our Organisation

Build sustainability capacity within Visit Belfast. Support and Improve employee wellbeing



Our actions

In 22-23 we have:

- Developed our three-year people strategy with wellbeing as one of the five priority areas
- Established an employee committee to help shape volunteering, wellbeing, social and engagement activities at Visit Belfast
- Launched our core company values
- Ensured that 100% of Visit Belfast employees are sustainability and inclusion trained including all new joiners.
- Supported employees to develop specialist skills in DEI, accessibility and inclusion, wellbeing, legacy/impact and carbon
- Funded free health checks for all employees
- Came 2nd in our category for the Active Travel challenge



In our first ever 'active travel challenge' with Sustrans, we came 2nd in our category with 69% employee participation, 393kg CO2 saved and 57,579 calories burned!



Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke

HEALTH CHECKS FOR STAFF

Chest Heart & Stroke

Health checks can detect the early warning signs associated with developing chest, heart and stroke conditions. Health Checks will be delivered by NI Chest Heart and Stroke and are private and confidential. They will include Blood Pressure, Cholesterol, Glucose, Atrial Fibrillation (Irregular heart beat) and Body Composition checks, along with tailored lifestyle advice.

Book your appointment today at Visit Belfast:

- 9th August
- 10th August
- 12th August
- 16th August
- 19th August

To book, use booking link: book.wellcheck.nichs.org.uk and enter booking code: VB22

For more information visit www.nichs.org.uk or email healthpromotion@nichs.org.uk

Our Organisation

Maximise the social and economic impact of Visit Belfast Activities



£110m

Economic Impact
+£26m YoY
+14% ahead of target

700

Volunteer Hours
+450 hours YoY

£22,115

Funds raised for charity
+£20,000 YoY
200% of target

14,612

Meals provided
Changing the Menu.
For Good

453

Visit Belfast partners supported
+9% YoY
42 not-for-profit/charity partners

10

CSR & Impact Initiatives



Green
Tourism

ACCREDITED

Our Industry

Our Industry

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



Our Actions

In 22-23 we have:

- Secured a Global innovation Award for our pioneering social impact project - 'Changing the Menu. For Good' to help tackle food poverty in Belfast through business events.
- Galvanised industry support and action on food waste and food poverty
- Led delivery of the Green Tourism certification programme in partnership with BCC and Industry which has accelerated sustainability performance across the sector.
- 81% of Belfast Hotel bedrooms are now sustainably certified.
- Developed the first Cruise Belfast sustainability plan with Belfast Harbour
- Collaborated with Visit Britain, Global Destination Sustainability movement, Green Tourism, All Ireland Sustainability Summit, University of Surrey, ABPCO, ICCA, WRAP, City DNA and Guardians of Grub to share ideas and learn from best practice.

Our Industry

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



81%

Hotel bedrooms
sustainably certified
+56% YoY

73%

Supplier Score
+32% YoY
GDS Index 2022

98

Businesses
committed to
Green Tourism
+15 YoY

41

Green Tourism
certified partners
+29 YoY

10

Venues Green
Tourism certified



Our Visitors & Clients

Our Visitors & Clients

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

Work with our clients to make sustainable business easy in Belfast.



Our Actions

In 22-23 we have:

- Provided a sustainability and impact support service to 75 clients across business events, travel trade and cruise
- Developed the first Cruise Belfast Sustainability plan with Belfast Harbour
- Developed over 16 sustainability themed blogs to inspire visitors and delegates to make sustainable choices
- Developed 10 CSR/Volunteering initiatives for event organisers and tour operators to support their Belfast programme
- Developed sustainability itineraries, content, toolkits and templates for VB websites, ezines, digital channels and presentations
- Surveyed visitors across all VIC sites to track attitudes and positively influence action
- Highlighted sustainability credentials of venues and suppliers on Visit Belfast's business events site and in its conference and events guide.

Our Visitors & Clients



74%

visitors interested in sustainability
-2% YoY

50%

visitors would like to take part in sustainable experiences
+3% YoY

46%

visitors interested in how they can support local projects and communities
+6% YoY

42%

visitors interested in how they can reduce the environmental impact of their visit
+4% YoY

502km

completed through Visit Belfast conference delegate runs designed to promote wellbeing at events

75

Clients supported through sustainability and impact service



visit Belfast

 **Translink**
BUS & TRAIN TICKETS

 *Translink Pride*
**EQUALITY
DIVERSITY &
INCLUSION**

OUR DIVERSITY MAKES THE DIFFERENCE
#translinkspirit
 Translink

Our City

Our City

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



Our Actions

In 22-23 we have:

- Accelerated our transition from a DMO to a DMMO, increasing our destination management and stewardship role to ensure that tourism is a force for good across Belfast
- Managed capacity across the destination - across inbound conferences, cruise calls and leisure visitors through our tourism barometer
- Prioritised neighbourhood tourism development, working with area partnership boards including Fáilte Feirste Thiar, EastSide Partnership and the businesses within these communities to increase and share tourism prosperity across Belfast
- Established neighbourhood tourism clusters
- Worked with cruise lines and the National Trust to support visitor management during the cruise season
- Focussed our marketing campaigns and sales activity to targets gaps in the city calendar and avoid peak capacity months
- Leveraged Belfast's gateway role to extend stay and spend through promoting regionality across business events, short breaks, cruise and tour segments

Our City

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



81%

Conferences are midweek
-2% YoY

55%

Conferences take place in the shoulder season
+7% YoY

48%

visitor enquiries handled by Visit Belfast are for regional destinations outside Belfast
+6% YoY

32%

Visit Belfast partners are across Northern Ireland
-1% YoY

78

Neighbourhood tourism businesses form part of Visit Belfast's partnership

Our City



Our City


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



Our Actions

In 22-23 we have:

- Supported Belfast City Council's accessibility and inclusion programme to help build capacity within the sector and amongst our staff
- Incorporated inclusion training into Visit Belfast's induction programme and ensured that 100% of all employees are inclusion trained
- Supported employees to develop specialist knowledge around introducing DEI into business events
- Introduced 'ReachDeck' onto our business events website which is an all-in-one digital inclusion solution which helps to make our online content accessible and usable to everyone.
- Provided advice and support to visitors, event organisers and tour operators on accessible venues, hotels and attractions across Belfast through our work with AccessAble
- Focussed on celebrating the diversity of Belfast in our marketing, communications and visitor servicing activities



Our 23-24 Plans

Measurement & Impact

Top 10

Sustainable
Destinations
Globally

90%

Hotel
Bedrooms
certified

85%

GDS Score
Top 5 DMO

Increase
Funds
Raised

Reduce
Carbon
Impact

Increase
Legacy
Impact

Industry
Clients
Visitors
Community
Impact &
Measurement

Strategic Interventions 23-24 - Key Priorities

Carbon

- Visit Belfast - Carbon Measurement & Reduction Plan
- Baseline Belfast's carbon impact for tourism & events
- Launch carbon measurement & reduction tool for business events
- Introduce an online carbon reduction and sustainable choices tool on our business events website

Social Impact

- Review, expand, promote and scale our Changing the Menu for Good pilot programme
- Increase Fundraising
- Increase Volunteering
- Survey and monitoring of impacts - clients, industry, VB, stakeholders & community
- Implement DEI plan

Legacy

- Launch Visit Belfast legacy and impact programme - 5 key themes
- Tier 1 Business events - bespoke legacy plans to be developed
- Improve monitoring, reporting and storytelling



Rachael McGuickin

Director of Business Development,
Sustainability and Transformation
Visit Belfast

rachaelmcguickin@visitbelfast.com



Jac Callan

Sustainability and Impact Manager
Visit Belfast

jaccallan@visitbelfast.com

visitBelfast