



## SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN 2024/2025

County Carlow has established a strong identity and brand for its Garden Trail, which currently features a collection of 18 garden attractions and includes a mix of great old gardens, town-sized gardens, community gardens, forest parks and award-winning garden centres. Since 2002 the Carlow Garden Trail has been responsible for the organisation of the annual Carlow Garden Festival, held over an eight-day period at the end of July/beginning of August. Now in its twenty-third year, the festival sees twenty acclaimed gardeners and garden designers from Ireland and the UK deliver an inviting range of specialist talks, garden tours and workshops.

### **Our starting point - where we are at now?**

1. All publications printed for the Carlow Garden Festival use Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper—a globally recognised standard that ensures the paper comes from responsibly managed forests that provide environmental, social and economic benefits. Sourced like a crop, the paper used for the Carlow Garden Festival publications comes from forests that are not only protected but are rapidly expanding daily. These forests are managed sustainably, ensuring a renewable supply of wood fibre while protecting biodiversity and capturing carbon.
2. The Carlow Garden Trail attaches great importance to community-led green spaces and the vital roles they play in supporting biodiversity, protecting the environment and promoting both the health of the planet and human wellbeing. In this regard, three community gardens form part of the Carlow Garden Trail, with An Gairdín Beo hosting a Carlow Garden Festival workshop each year.
3. An e-ticketing system is in operation negating the need for physical tickets with scanners used to facilitate entrance to garden festival events.
4. In certain venues visitors are encouraged to car pool for travel purposes, thus reducing carbon emissions.

	GOAL	What Action(s)?	Who is responsible?	By When?	Notes
	Training and Upskilling				
1	Further strengthen the knowledge and capacity of <b>all</b> venues on the Carlow Garden Festival so that sustainability is integrated into daily practices and communication with visitors during the Carlow Garden Festival. Training opportunities will prioritise group sessions to enhance collaboration and facilitate a cohesive approach to sustainability initiatives across all venues.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Update the eligibility criteria for participation in the Carlow Garden Festival. The revised criteria should prioritise sustainability, ensuring that all participants align, on an individual and collective basis, with the festival's commitment to environmentally responsible practices.</li> <li>2. Each business to register with Learn iFi (Fáilte Ireland portal) to provide access to concise, practical training sessions (5-15 minutes), such as "<i>What Does a Successful Sustainable Business Model Look Like?</i>". These sessions equip businesses with practical insights to enhance sustainability practices.</li> <li>3. Register for the Fáilte Ireland Sales Ready Programme, where applicable, with a specific focus on integrating sustainability into all aspects of the sales and marketing strategy for individual premises and the Carlow Garden Festival. This will ensure that</li> <li>4. Coordinate the delivery of a waste management workshop in collaboration with the Environmental Awareness Officer from Carlow County Council, focusing on effective waste reduction, recycling units and systems (i.e. clear bags, labels) and sustainable waste management strategies for all venues on the festival (three main waste systems - recycling, composting and general waste).</li> <li>5. Educate festival goers - Promote public transport and car pooling, share green tips for festival goers, ask festival goers to aim for zero impact from their visit</li> </ol>	All participating premises on the Carlow Garden Festival	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. March 2025</li> <li>2. Dec. 2025</li> <li>3. March 2025</li> <li>4. February 2025 (roll out of system by May 2025)</li> <li>5. July 2025</li> </ol>	Output: Sustainability is a core element in how all venues present themselves during the Carlow Garden Festival.

Leaner & Greener					
2.	<p>Carbon Emissions and Carbon Footprint</p> <p>To reduce emissions associated with Carlow Garden Festival (mainly private cars as mode of transport between venues)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Choose local contractors wherever possible i.e. marquee hire, sound, audio visual.</li> <li>2. Encourage attendees to the festival to carshare/carpool and use public transport, where possible (via website and social media)</li> <li>3. Explore the option of a public bus service for the duration of the festival in co-operation with Ring-a-Link and Climate Action Office of Carlow County Council</li> <li>4. Purchase carbon offsets for flights for visiting personalities.</li> </ol>	<p>Chairman of Carlow Garden Trail</p> <p>All participating members on the Carlow Garden Festival</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. June 2025 (tendering process)</li> <li>2. From May 2025</li> </ol>	
3	<i>Insert here any goal(s) for Energy Conservation &amp; Energy Management</i>	The festival members will need to determine their potential impact in this area.			
5.	<p>Water and Waste Management</p> <p>Explore opportunities to develop and enforce a waste and water management plan to minimise the festival's environmental impact. Engage with festival venues and attendees to promote sustainability.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Segregated waste management system. Encourage three (recyclables, general waste and food waste) source separation by ensuring appropriate bins are provided. Provide clear signage and consistent colourways and symbols for different bins. Highlight venues using composting.</li> <li>2. Cup system. Explore funding and implementation of CoCup initiative for some members of the Carlow Garden Festival. The removal of single use plastic from all members on the Carlow Garden Festival is not deemed to be feasible at this point</li> <li>3. Encourage venues to sign up to the 'tap map' on refill.ie to install new public drinking water fonts (Local Authority Prevention Network - possible funding available).</li> </ol>	<p>All participating members on the Carlow Garden Festival</p> <p>Altamont Plant Sales, Delta Sensory Gardens, Arboretum Home &amp; Garden Heaven, Duckett's Grove</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. July 2025</li> <li>2. May 2025</li> <li>3. April 2025</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In conjunction with Carlow County Council Environmental Awareness Officer and other relevant public bodies.</li> <li>2. A measurable reduction in waste sent to landfills and responsible water usage, will enhance the festival's reputation as a green and sustainable event.</li> <li>3. Get information back from waste contractors on tonnes of each waste stream collected</li> </ol>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote refill points before and during the Carlow Garden Festival.</li> <li>As more festival venues are considering rainwater harvesting as part of their own individual action plans explore a cohesive messaging around this potential initiative.</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>June &amp; July 2025</li> </ol>	
Better & Brighter					
6.	To foster a wildlife-friendly environment within each venue on the Carlow Garden Festival by promoting biodiversity through the adoption and promotion of sustainable gardening practices.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage each venue to prioritise the planting of native species that support local wildlife, including pollinators, birds and beneficial insects. Determine current practices and use content to input to “Louder and Prouder” messaging via social media and website channels</li> <li>Host a minimum of two workshops as part of the Carlow Garden Festival programme that focus on the importance of native plants and their role in maintaining ecological balance.</li> <li>Support sustainable gardening in the three garden centres participating in the Carlow Garden Festival by stocking recycled plastic pots and where possible, compostable plant tags, and sustainable gardening tools and accessories, such as grow houses made from recycled materials.</li> <li>Minimise the carbon footprint of plant sourcing by partnering with local growers or nurseries.</li> </ol>	<p>All participating members on the Carlow Garden Festival</p> <p>An Gairdin Beo and one other rotating premises</p> <p>Altamont Plant Sales, Arboretum Home and Garden Heaven &amp; Delta Sensory Gardens</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feb. 2025</li> <li>July/Aug 2025</li> <li>April 2025</li> <li>Ongoing</li> </ol>	Output: contribution to the overall biodiversity of the Carlow Garden Festival.
7.	To implement and promote Leave No Trace principles across all venues of the Carlow Garden Festival, ensuring minimal environmental impact, responsible waste removal and the protection of natural habitats, while	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use <i>Leave No Trace</i> principles across all marketing channels via QR codes</li> <li>Ensure implementation of consistent waste management system through adoption of 1.4 above</li> <li>Explore opportunity for bus service during the Carlow Garden Festival in co-operation with Climate Action Office,</li> </ol>	All participating members on the Carlow Garden Festival	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aug 2025</li> <li>Feb 2025</li> <li>Jan 2025</li> </ol>	

	encouraging visitors to adopt sustainable behaviours.	Carlow County Council and Ring-A-Link			
8.	Create an accessible and inclusive environment at the Carlow Garden Festival, ensuring that all visitors, regardless of age or ability can enjoy the festival workshops	1. Ensure dedicated accessible seating for visitors with mobility and hearing challenges across <u>all</u> venues. Advertise in advance	All participating members on the Carlow Garden Festival	1. Aug 2025	
9.	Strengthen and engage the local community through the Carlow Garden Festival by fostering collaboration, giving opportunities to local businesses to benefit from the festival	1. Highlight local food at each venue to celebrate and support local talent.	In collaboration with members of the Carlow Food Network	1. July 2025	
<b>Louder &amp; Prouder</b>					
10.	Integrate green and clean initiatives into the marketing campaign for the 2025 Carlow Garden Festival to highlight the festival's commitment to sustainability. Inspire festival venues, attendees and the broader community who visit the venues at this time to embrace eco-friendly practices.	1. Share "Green Tips for Festival Goers" on social media (LAPN) – see below 2. Ask festival goers to aim for zero impact from their visit. 3. QR codes to communicate eco-initiatives of individual premises and the festival as a whole to green initiatives (can also be used on all e-ticketing options) 4. Individual feature on each venue on festival page, social media and newsletters, and on their respective page on <a href="http://www.carlowgardentrail.com">www.carlowgardentrail.com</a> . Implement <b>#carlowgardenfestivalgoesgreen</b> 5. Focus on the sustainability message in 2025 to secure stand out for the festival in the national media space	All participating members on the Carlow Garden Festival and festival goers	1. May – Aug 2025	Output: A broader public awareness of the festival's green efforts, increased attendee engagement with green practices and a stronger reputation for the festival.

# FESTIVAL GOERS



Plan and promote efforts like park and stride, park and ride, cycling, etc.

Promote public transport via website/social media and provide details.



Share the 'Green Tips for Festival Goers' on social media, etc.

Ask festival goers to aim for zero impact from their visit.



Use signage so that bins are easily identifiable for festival goers.

Use signage with the 'Green Tips for Festival Goers'.



Get feedback from festival goers.