

Climate and Sustainability Policy & Action Plan

2026

Reviewed alongside the KAF Strategy 2024–28

Kilkenny Arts Festival (KAF) is an annual multi-disciplinary arts festival presenting opera, theatre, classical and contemporary music, literature and visual art across the city of Kilkenny. This document sets out KAF's Climate and Sustainability Policy - our commitment and objectives - and the Action Plan through which we deliver it.

Part One - Policy

Our Commitment

Our ambition is to make KAF a more sustainable festival. This policy reflects the ongoing development of our sustainability approach in line with our overall strategy, including efforts to be informed and proactive about sustainability. Since early 2023, KAF's Executive Leadership has been engaged in a number of more structured sustainability initiatives to understand and reduce our carbon footprint, including exploring reduction and offsetting options.

KAF is also committed to its civic role in raising awareness of sustainability in the arts, and of sustainability globally, through its programme.

Our Objectives

1. Understanding the sustainability landscape

In order to become a more sustainable festival, we will continue to build on our work of understanding our environmental impact.

2. Partnering for sustainability success

We will work with national and local organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors to be a more sustainable festival.

3. Sustainability policy and programme focus

We will continue to develop and monitor our sustainability policy throughout the lifetime of the KAF Strategy 2024–28, to progress the work in this area to date.

4. Communicating our sustainability activity

We will update our stakeholders regularly - across audiences, artists, funders and media partners - on our activities in this space.

Key Areas of Impact

ENERGY Transitioning towards solar, hybrid and public power supply in place of diesel generators, and increasing use of LED and low-energy lighting.	TRAVEL & TRANSPORT Reducing the environmental impact of artist and audience travel, and securing EV and hybrid vehicles for artist transport.
MATERIALS & WASTE Reducing printed materials in favour of digital and QR-code alternatives, and managing festival infrastructure disposal and reuse sustainably.	WATER Encouraging reusable bottles and water refill points, and ensuring responsible wastewater management at outdoor events.
BIODIVERSITY & PROGRAMMING Exploring nature, biodiversity and climate change through festival programming, panels and artistic commissions.	

Our Partners

KAF works with a range of organisations to progress this policy, including:

- **Kilkenny County Council (Local Authority)** - on public power supply and a city-wide low-energy lighting plan
- **Carlow Arts Festival and Cork Midsummer Festival** - sharing production and lighting infrastructure to reduce waste
- **Keep Kilkenny Beautiful and local environmental groups** - on local environmental initiatives, including water refill stations

Governance

Responsibility for this policy and its delivery is vested in KAF's Producer, Production Manager and Administrator, who oversee its implementation across the Festival's operations.

Part Two - Action Plan

The following sets out how we are putting this policy into practice, organised by theme. Each area shows the progress already made and our priorities going forward.

ENERGY

Progress to date	Priorities & next steps
- Increasing use of LED lighting for outdoor installations and venues, to improve energy efficiency - Using public power supply points wherever possible, and green diesel generators where mains power isn't available - Solar-powered energy has been used for events including Neon Dusk, Prism and The Alice Project	- Continue the transition to solar and hybrid power in place of diesel generators wherever possible - Engage external consultancy to consider carbon costs and offsetting options - Stay mindful of unintended consequences of sustainability actions, e.g. energy use in digital alternatives

TRAVEL & TRANSPORT

Progress to date	Priorities & next steps
- Kilkenny is accessible by public transport (bus and train); KAF encourages festival-goers to travel by public transport or to carpool - Private bus services provided for events outside the city, reducing individual car journeys - At least 50% of festival vehicles used to transport artists are hybrid and/or fully electric	- Secure further EV and EV/hybrid vehicles for volunteer drivers undertaking artist collection and hospitality - Understand the implications of artist travel and strive to reduce short-term hotel use within budgetary constraints, partnering with sister festivals nationally

MATERIALS, WASTE & COMMUNICATIONS

Progress to date	Priorities & next steps
- Moving from printed materials to QR codes; printing of programme notes halved since 2024, with QR code access now making up 50% of programme-note use - Working towards a 60% reduction in printed programmes by 2026 - Introduced cardboard water cartons in place of plastic, and compostable cups in venues - Working towards eliminating single-use plastics	- Continue reducing print materials in marketing and volunteer programme assets, e.g. T-shirt recycling/reuse and a core brand without annual dates to maximise reuse of collateral - Manage festival infrastructure disposal and recycling after the event sustainably, finding imaginative ways to reuse materials - Continue sharing production and lighting infrastructure with sister festivals (e.g. Carlow Arts Festival, Cork Midsummer Festival) to reduce waste

Progress to date	Priorities & next steps
	Balance investment in dateless core outdoor branding with annual marketing assets to maximise reuse of large collateral

WATER

Progress to date	Priorities & next steps
- Artists made aware of water points where available in venues, and encouraged to use reusable bottles - Wastewater from portaloos at outdoor events properly managed and disposed of by a certified, licensed contractor	Continue promoting reusable water bottles and water refill points to festival-goers and artists

BIODIVERSITY & PROGRAMMING

Progress to date	Priorities & next steps
Programming has begun exploring nature, biodiversity and climate change (2024–2025 and beyond), including panels, workshops and artistic responses incorporated into large-scale installations such as Light Up The Castle, and co-produced shows such as Neon Dusk	Continue developing programming strands exploring nature, biodiversity and climate change

PARTNERSHIPS & ADVOCACY

Progress to date	Priorities & next steps
Continuing to work with Kilkenny County Council on accessing public power supply to reduce generator use, including advising on a city-wide low-energy lighting plan with accessible points for public realm activities	- Explore how KAF can support national and local government sustainability initiatives relevant to the arts, festival ecosystem and tourism - Explore links with local environmental groups, such as Keep Kilkenny Beautiful and local water refill station initiatives

Priorities for 2026

- Expand solar-powered energy for events, building on Prism and The Alice Project
- Reach our target of a 60% reduction in printed programmes
- Deepen the partnership with Kilkenny County Council on city-wide public power access, reducing reliance on generators
- Progress carbon footprint measurement and the establishment of a baseline carbon footprint

Measurement & Monitoring

KAF does not currently have the capacity to measure water consumption, but energy consumption is monitored closely wherever possible - i.e. within our own control or in partner organisations/venues. Our waste management plan also includes measuring general and recycled waste.