



Sustainability Policy & Action Plan

Introduction

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them”
— Albert Einstein

As part of the Strategic Plan 2022–2026, The Lir Academy made a commitment to develop this Sustainability Policy and Action Plan.

At the beginning of 2023, Sinéad Wallace began an eight-month-long process to review working practices at The Lir Academy and assess how we could develop a policy that would move The Lir Academy forward in our journey towards sustainability.

This process involved meetings with The Lir Academy’s department heads and senior management team, and with Trinity College Dublin’s Sustainability

Manager Jane Hackett. There was a Lir-wide Town Hall Meeting in June to discuss the findings and ideas with the student and staff community.

This policy is the result of that research.

Climate change and biodiversity loss are the greatest challenges facing humanity. While the impact of the theatre industry is small on a global scale, the ability to influence behaviours and shift mindsets is great.

Our challenge is to help change the working model which has persisted since the birth of our industry. We must do this with urgency and great commitment so that we can make a career in theatre a sustainable career. As a training ground of excellence, The Lir Academy is committing itself to creating a workforce of environmentally-aware theatre practitioners who will work to make our industry less carbon intensive, less wasteful and more engaged with the biggest issue facing humanity.

Context

The United Nations (UN) defines sustainability as a trilateral plan for an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future. It consists of economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection, disaggregated into 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Lir Academy aligns its core values with these principles, aiming to foster a welcoming and diverse environment while integrating sustainability into its theatre practices.

The Lir Academy understands the importance of addressing economic, social, and environmental sustainability together, and recognises the intersectionality of our Sustainability Policy with our Gender Equality, Disability, and Anti-Racism policies. We acknowledge the need for fairness and equity in sustainability initiatives.

Our Sustainability Mission

The Lir Academy positions itself as an industry leader in Irish theatre. We train the technicians, stage managers, actors, designers, directors, practitioners and playwrights of the future.

We are committed to:

- reshaping the way we make theatre in Ireland.

- leading in adopting a model of theatre production and education which is ethical, socially responsible, inclusive and sustainable.

- working to embed sustainability in everything we do, fostering a sense of care for the planet and people around us in all students and staff at The Lir Academy.

Our Sustainability Vision

“Feeling a complete inability to do anything – ‘This is too big for me, I give up’ – that’s no use to anybody. [With] despair, all the energy to do something goes out of the room.”
— Mary Robinson

As a result of developing and implementing this policy, The Lir Academy is:

- Committed to reducing our impact on the environment. We see the urgent need to transform how we live and work to have less impact on our planet.

- Empowering our staff and students to be change makers.

- Using our position as educators to influence industry practice as our graduates become the workforce of the future.

- Seeing Lir graduates of the future as climate aware, carbon literate professionals working to make theatre in Ireland more sustainable.

- Aspiring to shape the future of the theatre industry in Ireland as we move towards sustainable working models.

Our Sustainability Values

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”
— Jane Goodall

The core values of The Lir Academy, as outlined in our Strategic Plan are Community, Equality, Creativity and Excellence.

To achieve our goals we will nourish:

- Community** - by becoming a laboratory space in which we explore how to make theatre more sustainably.

Equality - by ensuring that we allow equal access to all staff in September 2023 with a view to embedding a sustainable mindset.

Creativity - by committing to thinking flexibly, acting collaboratively and finding solutions to tackle our impact on the Climate together.

Excellence - by embedding sustainability in all our training so that The Lir Academy can become not only a centre of excellence in training but also in sustainable innovation in our industry.

Our Sustainability Priorities

- To develop and maintain policies through which to improve the sustainability of the Academy

- To align with Trinity College Dublin’s Sustainability Strategy and emissions targets

- To establish a student-led Lir Green Campus Committee to prioritise actions and recommend solutions to the Board and Senior Management team as appropriate

- To establish a staff-led Sustainability Working Group that will review Lir policies and practices with a view to making them more sustainable

- To raise awareness of sustainability issues amongst students and staff and act on feedback to implement suggested initiatives, including regularly circulating updates on green actions at The Lir Academy through the Lir Life newsletter

- To identify and promote good practice and personal responsibility within the Academy

- To monitor the implementation of actions through collection of data (e.g. electricity usage, waste production)

- To teach and model sustainable theatre production at The Lir Academy through the Theatre Green Book

- To encourage sustainable theatre production beyond The Lir Academy by encouraging the adoption of the Theatre Green Book.

- To develop and formalise stronger ties with the theatre industry to facilitate a circular economy.

Our Sustainability Focus

Our main targets and actions focus on four pillars.

1. Education
2. Production
3. Energy Use & Waste Management
4. Community Engagement

1. Education

“The omission of social and environmental impacts in our curriculum in the way we approach our designs is bordering on criminal. I think that the next generation of not just designers, but human beings are going to be facing climate change, period, they’re going to be grappling with it and if the people who are teaching right now aren’t moving our butts as fast as we can, to help equip our graduates to handle this as artists, as human beings, as professionals, as industry leaders, then we are remiss in our duties.”
— Sandra Goldmark, Associate Professor in Professional Practice in Theatre, Barnard College, New York (in conversation with Lir Stage Management & Technical Theatre student Iris Liange)

Our objective is to embed sustainability as a core value in all courses across The Lir Academy. This falls within Trinity College Dublin’s aim to create a Climate Smart Campus.

We will establish a working group to examine the changes needed to shift to a sustainable model of theatre production as outlined in the *Theatre Green Book*¹.

We will begin by rolling out carbon literacy training for all staff in September 2023 with a view to embedding a sustainable mindset.

The annual student induction week will feature a presentation on The Lir’s journey to becoming a Climate Smart Campus and an invitation to make a positive change.

By the academic year 2026/2027 we will introduce a certified carbon literacy course taken by all new students, including an overview of the UN Sustainable Development Goals so that all graduates will be certified Carbon Literate.

We will empower the students to make the changes needed for a sustainable future by establishing a Lir Green Campus Committee which will continue to improve on green initiatives at The Lir Academy.

We will integrate sustainability into the fabric of every course at The Lir Academy so that a career in theatre can become a sustainable option for graduates facing a future on an unstable planet.

We will celebrate sustainability initiatives and encourage all our students to explore and develop more sustainable working practices particularly in the Stage Management & Technical Theatre Third Year Projects.

2. Production

“As storytellers, we have a unique capacity to explore key issues with audiences both on and off the stage. In a warming world, this means taking leadership in communicating the importance of environmental action, whether that be through the sharing of our practice.”
— Staging Change¹, 2019 (from the Theatre Green Book)

Our objective across our theatre and film productions is to adapt to a new way of working with less virgin materials, less waste and a focus on re-use instead of the new. This falls within Trinity’s Sustainability Strategy to create a Circular Campus.

We will establish a working group to examine the changes needed to shift to a sustainable model of theatre production as outlined in the *Theatre Green Book*².

We are committing to producing our fourth show of the academic year, in March 2024, to the Theatre Green Book’s Baseline Standard as an introduction to this new model of production.

We are committed to exploring a sustainable model of film production using the *Albert Production Handbook*³ by calculating our carbon footprint⁴ by calculating our carbon footprint for Years 1 and creating targets for reductions in Year 2.

We will monitor productions for energy usage and waste production by keeping a materials inventory for each production managed by each department head and overseen by the production manager. In the programming of work at The Lir Academy, we will engage with stories that guide us in this time of environmental crisis.

¹ Staging Change was a network for theatre makers, venues and organisations in the UK to tackle the climate crisis. It was operational between 2018 and 2022.

² *Theatre Green Book* online at www.theatregreenbook.com/book-one-education-section/

³ *The Albert Production Handbook* is promoted by Screen Ireland as the optimum tool for creating film sustainably.

3. Energy Use and Waste Management

“Climate change is the result of more than a century of unsustainable energy and land use, lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production... taking action now can move us towards a fairer, more sustainable world.”
— IPCC Working Group III Co-Chair Jim Skea

Energy Use / Emissions
Our objective is to align with Trinity’s Emissions Target of reducing our carbon emissions by 51% by 2030, and to aim to reach net zero by 2040.

In the academic year 2023/2024, we will engage a specialist to calculate The Lir’s baseline carbon footprint and set targets to reduce our footprint in line with the targets above. We will then investigate longer term capital investment required to arrive at net zero.

We will also look to move to a 100% green energy electricity supplier to help achieve these targets.

Waste
We will commit to the responsible disposal of all waste on campus including increasing the capacity for recycling and composting within The Lir Academy.

We will engage with Trinity in their Waste Management Strategy as outlined in Trinity’s Sustainability Strategy.

We will advocate for a ban on single use plastics across campus and encourage personal responsibility and a zero waste mentality.

Travel
We will review our Travel Policy to ensure sustainability is central to it. The Sustainability Action Working Group will establish what defines the need for air travel and will align our Travel Policy with Trinity’s Smarter Travel Strategy. With the development of Trinity East Campus, we will advocate for increased bike racks, scooter storage and EV charging points to ensure we can work towards more active travel.

Office and Administration
Our objective is to make all day-to-day operations on campus environmentally sustainable and to reduce carbon emissions produced through our operations.

All purchasing/procurement will use sustainability and ethical considerations as key pillars in decision making to reduce our Scope 3 emissions and contribute to a more equitable world. We will phase out non-recycled materials where possible, reduce the use of paper, and better manage data across the Academy.

⁴ “Net-zero means reducing GHG emissions in line with latest climate science and balancing remaining residual emissions through carbon removal credits. Having net zero emissions means you are balancing the whole amount of greenhouse gas released with the amount removed from the atmosphere.” (extract from Trinity’s Sustainability Strategy)

4. Community Engagement

Our objective is to engage with all stakeholders within The Lir Academy, Trinity College Dublin, the local area, and the theatre community to talk about sustainability and inspire change.

Trinity College Dublin
We will align with Trinity’s Sustainability Strategy and Emissions Targets. We will work with Trinity to meet all reporting obligations under the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive. Members of our newly formed Lir Green Campus Committee will also work with Trinity’s Green Campus Committee to roll out initiatives across the whole university. We will continue to work with Trinity on the greening of Trinity East and help to deliver the new vision for Trinity East under the broad theme of sustainability.

The Lir Academy
To engage the student community at The Lir Academy we will create a Lir Green Campus Committee made up of current students from all disciplines and graduate students through the alumni network.

Personal Responsibility
We will actively encourage students and staff to take personal responsibility for their own waste and commitment to sustainability by spreading the zero waste ethos.

We will ask students and staff to:

- Use reusable cups
- Use refillable water bottles
- Avoid single use plastics
- Consider sustainable travel options to and from The Lir Academy.

On campus, we will increase the facilities for composting food waste, using recycling services and provide education on how to use them. The Lir Green Campus Committee will continually review the actions and guidance for staff and students.

The Local Area
The Lir Academy will engage with all local environmental initiatives and continue to develop strategies with local community groups such as Greening Pearse Street.

The Theatre Community
The Irish theatre community is a small group of dedicated individuals, companies, theatres, festivals, institutions and funding bodies. We will work with all these stakeholders to meet our objective to spread the message of sustainable theatre-making across Ireland. Through this engagement with the theatre industry in Ireland and abroad, we will work to develop and support a circular model of theatre-making.

Measurable Targets

We will know that we are achieving the commitments outlined in this policy by measuring and achieving the following targets:

- In line with Trinity’s targets outlined in their sustainability strategy, we will aim to reduce our emissions by 51% by 2030. We will aim to be net zero by 2040.

- From January to March 2024 we will trial a Baseline Standard Theatre Green Book show – our Show 4. This will be documented and reviewed with a view to modifying our production processes and lead-in times to facilitate progressing towards ongoing full Theatre Green Book productions.

- By 2026, all students will take part in a Sustainability Induction in their first year.

- By 2027, all Stage Management and Technical Theatre (SMTT) students will be certified Carbon Literate.

- By 2027, we will aim to be creating all in-house productions to the Theatre Green Book baseline standard at a minimum. Progress will be reported annually.

Delivery and Oversight

In order to ensure the effective delivery of this strategy The Lir Academy will amend its formal governance structures and procedures as follows:

- Board approval will be sought for this policy in July 2023

- We will publish a detailed Action Plan to accompany this policy by October 2023.

- The Lir Academy will establish a new Sustainability Action Working Group, chaired by the Director, which will oversee the delivery of the targets and timelines set out in this document.

- The Lir Academy will then update its Code of Governance and other key documents to specifically reflect the goals outlined in this document.

- The Lir’s Director will be responsible for the delivery of this policy working with members of the Senior Management Team and the Sustainability Action Working Group.

- The Director will present an annual progress report to the Board.