Tralee Bay Wetlands Environmental Policy

Contents

1. Mission Statement

The main aim of the Tralee Bay Wetlands centre is not only to promote and raise awareness of the fantastic reservoir of biodiversity in Tralee Bay, but also to promote and raise awareness of broader environmental issues both to tourists and school visitors. As such, it is extremely important to us that we take responsibility for our own environmental impacts and act to minimise them wherever possible. We hope that by doing so we can demonstrate leadership in the practice of environmental sustainability to our wider community.

At Tralee Bay Wetlands Centre, we recognise that we impact the environment, not only directly through our own activities but also indirectly through the activities of our suppliers, both of goods and services, and our customers. We are committed firstly to understanding these impacts and then to working to improve our practice on a continual basis.

2. Implementation

The Tralee Bay Wetlands Environmental Policy is a statement of our commitment to help reduce the impact of our activities on the environment. The Policy is supported by an Environmental Action Plan, which specifies how the policy will be implemented, with targets and a named person responsible for delivery. We will work with our board, management, staff, suppliers, funders and customers to ensure that we consider and communicate the environmental impacts of our activities. Every year we will assess and report our environmental performance to all of our stakeholders and our customers. This information will be used to update our action plan for the coming year.

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Joanie McAuliffe, Manager

3. Scope of Policy

Our business has environmental impacts in many areas, including energy, water, waste, food, biodiversity and toxicity. Our ability to improve these impacts depends not only on our knowledge of these impacts but also on our ability to change and influence decisions not always within our direct control (such as the activities of our municipal authority and suppliers). We will exert our efforts as much as possible to understand, measure, improve and communicate our environmental performance.

4. Key Environmental Impacts

The heart of the Tralee Bay Wetlands Centre is the newly built visitor's centre and viewing tower situated just off the Ballyard Road in Tralee. The building houses an interpretive exhibition area, cafeteria and a staff area with canteen and office space. The centre grounds (9 hectares in total) consist of a large public access area in front of the building, consisting of a walkway around a large, man-made lake, and a wetland area, with constructed channels, walkways, bird hides and two shallow, man-made ponds. The primary environmental impacts of the business are as follows:

4.1 Energy Consumption

- Fossil-fuel energy consumption; this can be further expressed as that used for:
    - Lighting
    - Heating
    - Electrical
    - Transport (Petrol/Diesel used by staff, customers and deliveries)
    - Diesel/Petrol used for grounds maintenance and work
    - Energy consumed in charging the tour boat batteries

A Carbon Calculators (www.change.ie) has been used to calculate the carbon footprint, including waste and water consumption, of the business. Details of this calculation can be found below in Section 5.

The building is still too new to get assessed for a BER rating, but was built to a very high standard of insulation. Furthermore, a large array of solar panels provides hot water for the building, which also supplies the heating system, resulting in a low fossil fuel input to heat the building.

All of the lights in the staff area of the building are on a sensor – they will turn off if the rooms are unoccupied to reduce energy consumption. Furthermore, the lights have a manual override so that they can be switched off when the rooms are occupied during the day.

4.2 Water consumption

- Domestic usage (staff/customers)
- Cafeteria kitchen usage
- Maintenance (power washing, cleaning)
- Maintenance of sufficient water levels in all onsite water bodies

The business has its own well, which provides water for filling the man-made water bodies on the site (main lake, duck ponds and wetland channels). While there is energy cost

associated with pumping it up (electrical pump), the costs associated with water treatment are not incurred for this usage. Wherever possible, water used outside for cleaning and maintenance is taken from one of the water bodies, rather than from the taps.

Dual-flush toilets have been fitted in all of the bathrooms. A proposal has been put forward for the replacement of all taps in the public areas of the building with automatic shut-off units.

A water meter was not fitted as part of the original build in 2011, so for the purposes of calculation, we estimated the water usage for 2012/13 to be similar to that of a medium-sized café. Water consumption has been properly metered for the following years to date.

Waste water from the site is removed as part of Tralee's wastewater and sewerage scheme and is treated at the wastewater treatment plant in Fenit, meeting EPA nutrient regulations before discharge into the sea.

4.3 Waste generation

- Domestic waste
- Kitchen waste
- Public waste and litter
- Animal waste

Waste removal from the site is currently being handled by Higgins Waste. Waste is separated into dry recyclables, landfill and compostable waste. The kitchen, however, no longer has a waste contract and have been removing its own waste from the site.

We are committed to educating all staff and customers on responsible waste. Two-part bins (waste and recycling) have been properly placed and advertised in all areas of the site.

We have a commitment to the reduction of waste at source (return of packaging to delivery, reduction of food packaging from suppliers in the kitchen, bulk purchase of packaged items such as sugar, salt, sauces etc).

Animal waste is kept to a minimum by appropriately placed dog-litter bags around the public areas of the site.

4.4 Use of detergents, disinfectants and chemicals

- Disinfectants, detergents, paints, materials used for construction and maintenance.
- Paints/preservatives/cleaning chemicals/pesticides/herbicides used in grounds maintenance and pest control.

Cleaning chemicals and disinfectants used are environmentally friendly/biodegradable products (Ecover/Lilly's Eco-clean). Where toxic products are necessary (weatherproof paints, pesticides for invasive species control) their use is kept to a minimum and all safety and environmental regulations followed closely to minimise their impact.

Spraying for weed control is kept to a minimum where necessary, and replaced with manual weeding where possible.

4.5 Biodiversity

- Impacts on wildlife from building lights, heat, sound, and footprint.
- Impact on wildlife caused by public activity and tours (boat activity, human interaction etc.)
- Impact on wildlife caused by grounds work and maintenance.

A full ecological survey was carried out by the consultancy used on the build (WWT Consulting), to ensure that no habitat or species of high conservation value was impacted during the build, and that all necessary steps were taken during construction to minimise the damage caused. Details of the survey can be found in the attached document **TTC03_Ecological surveys final_100614**.

Building lights and grounds lights are turned off shortly after dark to reduce light pollution.

Lawn mowing is kept to specified areas – lawn area next to building and adjacent to car park, and path verges. Large grassy areas adjacent to the driveways have been ploughed and will be replaced with long grass and herbaceous park areas, which will promote biodiversity.

A large area of trees has been planted adjacent to railway track with a mix of species (hawthorn, wild rose etc.)

Grounds work and maintenance is done as sensitively as possible with regards earth disturbance and noise pollution. The use of toxic chemicals and pesticides is limited to very restricted areas, primarily to do with invasive species control (Japanese Knotweed). Additionally, large-scale maintenance of reedbeds and hedgerows is done outside of the bird nesting season, as per current Irish legislation.

Visitors are restricted to path and walkway areas to avoid damage to delicate habitat. Boat engines are silent (electric) to avoid noise disturbance to bird life.

5. Reporting and Communication

The year 2012/2013 was our baseline year for understanding our company's environmental impacts and what decisions we can make to reduce those impacts. Data collected from that year will be used to inform the setting of our environmental goals and targets for future improvement. Also shown below is our footprint from 2015, which shows great improvement in some areas.

A breakdown of our carbon footprint is shown below, calculated by the carbon management tool for businesses found at change.ie (2012/13), and carbonfootprint.com (2015). During our first year of operation some figures had to be estimated, since complete data was not available for all aspects of the business (for example, a water meter was not fitted to the mains supply of the building during the initial build. The calculation in 2015 rectified some of those issues, particularly the water and a more complete breakdown of staff commuting costs, but a carbon calculator was not found that properly incorporated water and waste into the footprint.

95.02 tonnes per year was our estimated carbon number in **2013** – this has been significantly reduced to **65.82 tonnes** in **2015**, a reduction of **31%**. However, it must be noted that this number is not directly comparable, since different calculators were used. Assuming that the waste and water figures remained at a similar percentage, then a rough correction would be **67.61** tonnes, still a reduction of 29%

4735 litres of LPG was used as a backup for the solar heating and for the hot water in 2013. This was reduced **to 3220 litres** in **2015**, a reduction of **32%.** This reduction was achieved through a combination of increased awareness and more familiarity with the building's heat recovery systems.

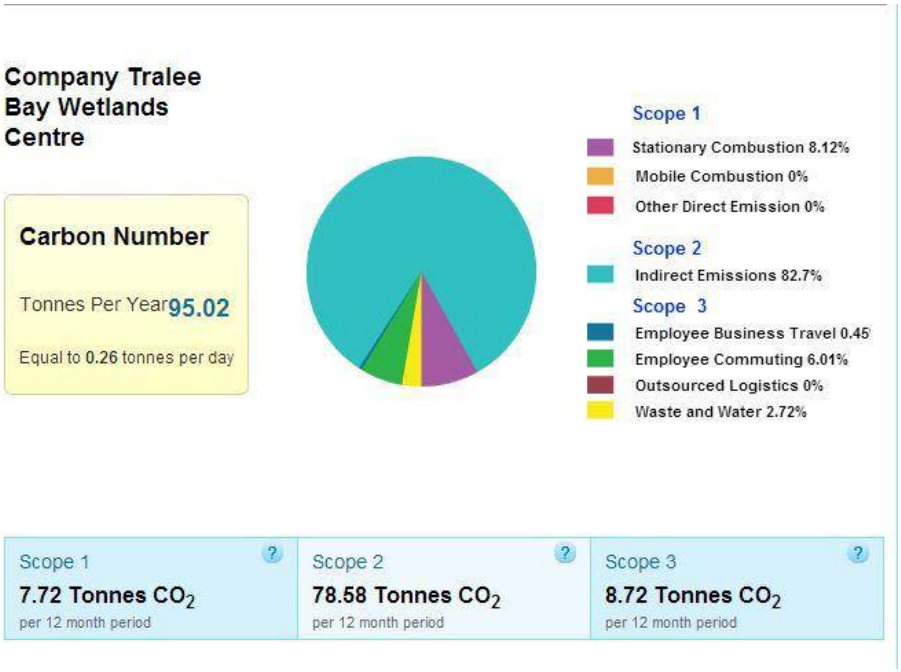
Direct consumption of petrol/diesel used for transport and maintenance was estimated at **6.133 tonnes of carbon** in **2013**. This has increased to **8.22 tonnes** in **2015**, an increase of **34%**. The increase is partly attributable to a more complete calculation of all part-time and seasonal staff commuting impacts and the replacement of a full-time staff member that was walking to work with one that has a longer commute, but primarily due to the expansion of the business and the hire of more staff members.

146,057 kWh of electricity were used in **2013**. This has been reduced to **112,100 kWh** in **2015**, a reduction of **23%**. The 2013 figures were partly estimated, however, due to the data for the full year not being available at the time. The reason for the reduction is attributable to a number of factors, including staff awareness on lighting, the fitting of manual overrides to automatic lights for the summer months and the reduction in the amount of water pumps being used to fill water bodies.

600 cubic metres of mains water were used in **2013** (this number however was an estimate based on a comparably sized business in Tralee, since there was no meter fitted onsite at the time). This has been reduced to **444 cubic metres** in **2015**, a reduction of **26%**.

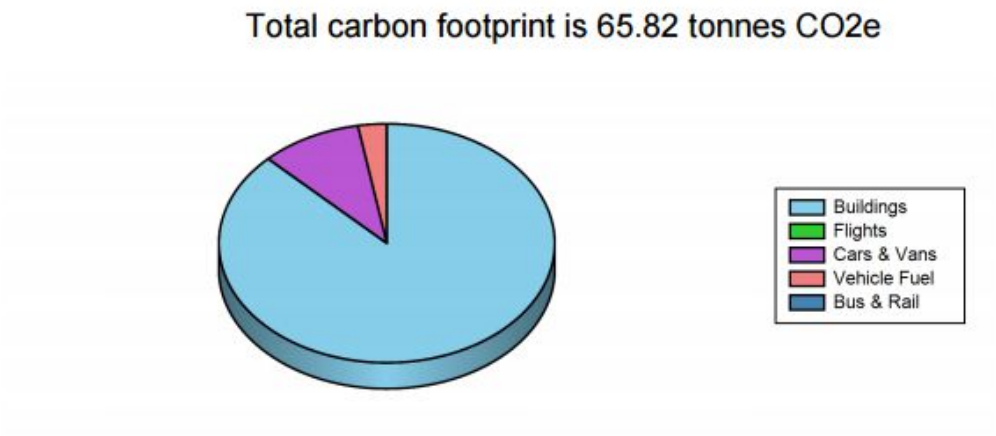
4.52 tonnes of waste were generated in **2013**. Of this 0.68 tonnes was recycled, 1.62 tonnes was composted and 2.22 tonnes was landfilled. We no longer have figures for the restaurant, since they are removing their own waste – however in 2015 the rest of the facility produced **1.43 tonnes of waste**, of which 0.54 tonnes was recycled. We have a significant issue currently where large amounts of household rubbish is being dumped into our public bins on the site, which not only raises the amount of waste we must remove, but also renders otherwise recyclable waste into general waste due to mixing. We are currently working with the local authority to reduce this problem.

Carbon Calculation 2013



Carbon Calculation 2015 (for a more complete breakdown, see attached report)

Company name	Tralee Bay Wetlands Centre
Data completed by	David McCormick
No of employees	12
Data period	1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015



The consideration of our environmental impacts will be a standing item on all internal meetings concerning staff travel, event planning, office supplies, publications and grounds work/maintenance.

A mid-year meeting will be scheduled to discuss environmental impacts and progress towards meeting improvement targets for that year.

An environmental report will be prepared annually and made available via website and mailing list to all of our board members, staff, customers and suppliers.