



Climate Action Plan 2026–2029

1. Executive Summary

Wexford Festival Opera (WFO), operating under Wexford Festival Trust, is committed to embedding climate action across all aspects of its artistic, operational, and organisational activity.

This Climate Action Plan builds upon the organisation's Environmental Sustainability Policy (March 2025) and establishes a structured, measurable roadmap aligned with the Arts Council's climate requirements and Ireland's national target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030.

WFO is uniquely positioned as a leader in climate action within the Irish cultural sector through:

- Participation in a pilot programme with CheckEarth
- Acceptance into the Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme

These partnerships enable a data-driven, credible, and nationally aligned approach, supporting both delivery and accountability.

In parallel, WFO is embedding climate action into its artistic programme, recognising the power of opera to engage audiences with urgent global challenges.

2. Organisational Context

Wexford Festival Trust encompasses:

- Wexford Festival Opera
- The National Opera House, which is owned and operated by Wexford Festival Trust and serves as the organisation's sole building and primary operational base
- An annual, two-week festival of (70+) events
- Year-round, off-season performances and events

The organisation recognises that climate change presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the cultural sector and is committed to ensuring that sustainability is at the core of its activities.

3. Vision & Strategic Commitments

Vision:

To position Wexford Festival Opera as a European leader in sustainable opera production and environmentally responsible festival practice.

Strategic Commitments:

- Deliver measurable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions
- Embed sustainability into artistic and operational decision-making
- Use opera as a platform for climate awareness and engagement
- Contribute to national and sectoral climate action efforts
- Share learning and leadership across the arts sector

4. Sector Leadership & Partnerships

WFO's Climate Action Plan is strengthened through engagement with two significant national initiatives:

Data & Measurement

Participation in a pilot programme with CheckEarth enables:

- Real-time environmental impact tracking
- Robust carbon accounting
- Evidence-based decision-making

National Climate Action Programme - Acceptance into the Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme:

- Recognises WFO as a key cultural tourism organisation
- Provides access to national expertise and benchmarking
- Aligns the organisation with Ireland's sustainable tourism strategy

5. Baseline & Measurement

WFO will establish a comprehensive carbon baseline in 2026, covering:

- Energy use (National Opera House)
- Travel (artists, staff, production teams)

- Production materials (sets and costumes)
- Waste streams

This will be delivered using CheckEarth tools, ensuring consistency, accuracy, and alignment with national frameworks.

Key Metrics:

- Total emissions (tCO₂e)
- Emissions per production
- Emissions per audience member
- % reuse of materials
- Waste diversion rates

6. Targets (2026–2029)

Area	Target
Energy emissions	-30%
Travel emissions	-25%
Materials reuse	70%
Waste to landfill	<10%
Sustainable procurement	80%

7. Action Plan

7.1 Energy & Buildings

As owner and operator of the National Opera House, Wexford Festival Trust has direct responsibility for the environmental performance of its building infrastructure.

This ownership enables a long-term, strategic approach to building decarbonisation and energy efficiency.

Actions:

- Conduct energy audits
- Transition to renewable electricity
- Implement energy monitoring systems

Capital Project:

As owner of the National Opera House, Wexford Festival Trust is currently preparing a funding

application to the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport to support a full transition to LED lighting throughout the building.

This project will:

- Significantly reduce energy consumption
- Lower operational emissions
- Improve long-term sustainability

Guidance from CheckEarth and the Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme will inform best practice in sustainable building management.

7.2 Sustainable Production

- Introduce circular design principles for sets and costumes
- Prioritise reuse, recycling, and sustainable materials
- Develop partnerships for sharing production assets

7.3 Travel & Mobility

- Implement low-carbon travel guidelines
- Reduce flights where feasible
- Encourage sustainable travel options
- Track emissions using CheckEarth tools

7.4 Waste & Resource Efficiency

- Work with waste management providers to better understand current waste streams and identify opportunities to reduce waste and increase diversion from landfill
- Reduce overall waste generation through procurement and production practices
- Prioritise reuse of materials across productions and operations

7.5 Procurement

- Introduce a Green Procurement Policy
- Engage suppliers in sustainability commitments

7.6 People & Governance

- Maintain and empower Wexford Festival Opera's established Green Team
 - Deliver staff awareness and training
 - Implement biannual reporting to the Board, aligned with pre- and post-festival periods, ensuring meaningful evaluation of progress, data, and outcomes
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8. Artistic Programming & Climate Engagement

WFO recognises that its most powerful contribution to climate action lies in its ability to engage audiences and communities through artistic work. Examples include:

8.1 Climate-Focused Opera Development

WFO is actively developing new works that address climate change and environmental themes:

Seedlings, (2023)

- Conceived by Elizabeth Drwal
 - Composed by Andrew Synott
 - Partnership with Music Generation
 - Explores ecological awareness and environmental change
 - Serves as a pilot for future climate-focused commissions
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8.2 Proposed Community Opera: *Sea Shanty Project (2028)*

WFO is developing a community opera /educational project based on sea shanties, engaging local community members.

Objectives:

- Collaborate with fishermen and women whose livelihoods depend on the sea
- Explore lived experiences of environmental change
- Raise awareness of:
 - Climate impacts on marine ecosystems
 - Effects on fishing livelihoods

This initiative represents a powerful intersection of:

- Artistic innovation
- Community engagement
- Climate education

8.3 Audience Engagement

- Promote sustainable audience behaviours
- Reduce printed materials
- Integrate sustainability messaging into programming

These initiatives align with sustainable tourism strategies through the Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme.

9. Implementation Timeline

2026

- Establish baseline (CheckEarth)
- Governance structures
- Immediate operational improvements

2027

- Embed sustainable production practices
- Advance artistic climate programming

2028

- Deliver major emissions reductions
- Progress capital investment

2029

- Achieve targets
- Publish full impact report

10. Reporting & Review

WFO will:

- Produce annual Climate Action Reports
- Track KPIs using CheckEarth data
- Update the Climate Action Plan annually

- Report to the Board on a biannual basis, aligned with pre- and post-festival periods, ensuring meaningful oversight and strategic alignment
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11. Conclusion

This Climate Action Plan transforms Wexford Festival Trust's Environmental Sustainability Policy into a clear, actionable, and measurable framework:

- Strong governance and accountability
- Clear and achievable targets
- Integration of sustainability across operations and artistic programming
- National leadership through participation in:
 - CheckEarth
 - Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme

Through this work, Wexford Festival Opera will not only reduce its environmental impact but also contribute meaningfully to cultural and societal engagement with climate change.