

Earth Day & World Environment Day Celebration Top Tips

Background

BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY IRELAND

Business in the Community Ireland is a movement for sustainable change in business. One of our key strategic focus areas is working with our member companies on their transition to a Low Carbon Future. In order to reduce their environmental impacts, organisations can undertake hard technical measures such as renewable energy investments, restoring wetlands or retrofitting older buildings. However, softer measures such as employee awareness and education can be equally as impactful, the purpose of this guide is to give organisations some ideas on how to engage their employees on environmental issues as part of Earth Day and World Environment Day international campaigns.

1. Earth Day (Saturday 22nd of April 2023)



Earth Day was founded in 1970 as a day of education about environmental issues, and Earth Day 2023 will occur on Saturday the 22nd of April. The holiday is now a global celebration that's sometimes extended into Earth Week, a full seven days of events focused on green living. The brainchild of Senator Gaylord Nelson and inspired by the protests of the 1960s, Earth Day began as a "national teach-in on the environment" and was held on April 22 to maximize the number of students that could be reached on university campuses. By raising public awareness of pollution, Nelson hoped to bring environmental causes into the national spotlight. (Source: [Earthday.org](https://earthday.org))

The theme for Earth Day 2023 is "[Invest In Our Planet](#)", now is the time for the unstoppable courage to preserve and protect our health, our families, our livelihood. Together, we must Invest In Our Planet. Because a green future is a prosperous future.

2. World Environment Day (Monday 5th of June 2023)



World Environment Day (WED) is celebrated on 5 June every year and is the United Nations' principal vehicle for encouraging awareness and action for the protection of the environment. First held in 1974, it has been a flagship campaign for raising awareness on environmental issues emerging from marine pollution, human overpopulation and global warming to sustainable consumption and wildlife crime. World Environment Day has grown to become a global platform for public outreach, with participation from over 143 countries annually. Each year, WED has provided a new theme that major corporations, NGOs, communities, governments and all celebrities worldwide adopt to advocate environmental causes.

The theme for World Environment Day in 2023 is “**Solutions to Plastic Pollution**”. The campaign for World Environment Day 2023 will use the hashtag and slogan **#BeatPlasticPollution** (Source: [WorldEnvironmentDay.Global](https://www.worldenvironmentday.org/))

3. Generating Environmental Awareness Not Limited to Above Dates



It is possible to generate environmental awareness for your employees at any time throughout the year but celebrating these global awareness dates present the opportunity for wider engagement

There are also various other official environmental awareness days throughout the year including (i) World Wetlands Day (ii) World Water Day (iii) Earth Hour and many more. See our calendar of Irish Global CSR and Sustainability Dates on [BITCI's Members' Only area](#)

How to Mark World Environment Day/Earth day.

1. Organise an Event

Organising an event to mark WED or Earth Day can be a fun, engaging and impactful way of educating your employees on the importance of environmental issues. The event can take many different formats including:

1. Lunch and **Learn/Knowledge** Sharing Session for all employees.
2. Form part of an **All Hands /Town Hall** meeting.
3. An activity organised by the **Sports & Social Committee** or equivalent

In terms of content for the event, the WED/Earth Day can include one or a combination of features outlined below:

1. Invite a **guest speaker** from a local university, Environmental NGO or someone with authority on an environmental issue. Depending on the topic, they could give a presentation, form part of a panel discussion or participate in a fire side/podcast type conversation with a **representative from your organisation**.
2. If you are not able to get an external speaker, you may find that there is an **employee who is an expert** on a specific environmental issue. They could share their knowledge of an environmental topic with their fellow employees.
3. Another idea would be to **organise a panel discussion** with a select group of employees to talk about green actions they have taken in their own lives e.g. switch to an electric car, started growing their own vegetable garden, planting and maintaining a wildflower meadow, volunteering with a local environmental charity or Tidy Towns committee, getting their children involved in a more environmentally conscious lifestyle or vice versa. They will be able to share their learnings with their colleagues and encourage others to take up more **environmentally friendly actions** in their own lives.
4. **Organise a fun activity** which is memorable for employees and allow them to take a break from their day jobs. Possible examples include:
 - An environmental themed table quiz
 - Identify what item is recyclable or not challenge

- Biodiversity/nature-based photo competition
- Scavenger Hunt
- Children's art competition

2. Engage With Your Local Community

Many Business in the Community Ireland members have strong relationships with charities, neighbouring community groups or with local schools as part of our Business Action on Education programmes and others. One idea would be to get them involved in the Earth Day or World Environment Day Celebrations. Employees could give a **talk to their local school** on the what the company is doing to reduce their environmental impact. The company could also give pro-bono advice to a local NGO or school on how to measure their carbon footprint, reduce waste or save water. There are also many environmental NGOs that organise **beach cleans, nature clean-ups, educational talks, workshops** and much more.

Examples include **Leave No Trace, An Taisce's Clean Coasts, Grow it Yourself, Voice of the Irish Environment** and many more. See [BITCI Biodiversity Handbook for Business](#) for a full list of Environmental NGOs.

*N.B, ensure that environmental based volunteering opportunities are in line with ongoing Government Covid regulations, and this is agreed with the charity in advance of the volunteering activity.

3. Organise an Awareness Campaign

If it is not possible to organise an event depending on the nature of the organisations work and for employees whose role is not desk based, it could be a good idea to organise a **communications campaign**. The message can be spread using internal communications channels, CEO updates to all employees, social media platforms, posters, wall mounted tv displays etc.

Messaging can include:

- Top tips/recommended actions people can take reduce waste, save water and protect biodiversity etc.
- Factual information on the negative impacts which human activity is having on the environment.
- Examples of initiatives the company is taking to reduce their own environmental impact.

There are a plethora of sources which provide credible information to support your environmental communications campaigns. Some examples include:



Good Life Goals: Personal actions that everyone can take to support the Sustainable Development Goals



Environmental Protection Agency: Guide to understanding the science behind Climate Change and the Impacts that is having.



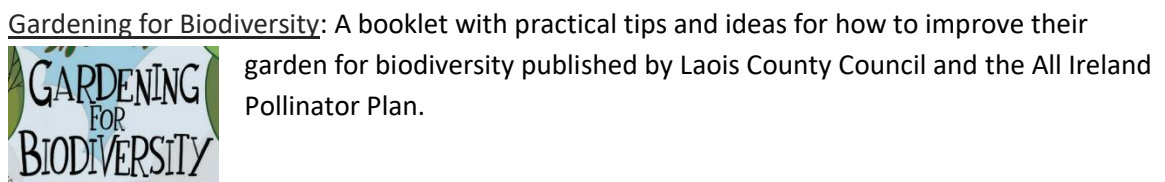
MyWaste.ie: Ireland's official guide to managing waste and the impacts it has on the environment.



Business in the Community Ireland's Biodiversity Handbook for Business. This Booklet provides guidance on how to begin your company's biodiversity journey; how to engage your staff; and how to support your communities



National Biodiversity Data Centre/All Ireland Pollinator Plan: Information on plants and species in Ireland which invasive but are at risk of extinction in Ireland. The All Ireland Pollinator Plan provide practical actions business can take to protect pollinators.



Gardening for Biodiversity: A booklet with practical tips and ideas for how to improve their garden for biodiversity published by Laois County Council and the All Ireland Pollinator Plan.

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI): Energy Saving Tips at home



Embedding Project – Issue Snapshots : The Embedding

Project have curated a selection of the most relevant resources and tools to help you better understand and address a wide range of key sustainability issues. This newly launched tool is a work in progress, and are adding new resources on a daily basis.

The Shift: A great website that you can search for sustainability tools including Employee Engagement



Biodiversity Maps Ireland: Useful tool to identify protected areas and species around Ireland



4. Host a Virtual Hackathon

A Virtual Hackathon can give the opportunity to employees to share their thoughts and ideas on how they can make their company more sustainable, could create a brainstorm session, this would allow the company to identify their “green ambassadors”.

BITCI Member Organisation Examples

Accenture – Eco Season

During Accenture’s “eco season” from Earth Day through World Environment Day 2021, Accenture people engaged in a challenge to take daily eco actions to help reduce their individual footprint. For this challenge, Accenture collaborated with Count Us In, which aims to mobilize 1 billion people to act sustainably over the next decade. Daily eco actions included shopping locally, reducing electricity consumption at home and committing to waste-free and meatless days

Gas Network Ireland – GoGlas Campaign

GNI’s Go Glas was a communications campaign to help engage staff in environmental and energy matters at home and at work. The campaign ran over the course of a year and each month had a different environmental theme. For example, one of the months was focused on biodiversity and training was provided on the identification and management of invasive alien plant species and other sessions on the benefits of biodiversity and what staff can do. Another month was dedicated to waste and GNI organised a waste electronic and electrical equipment (WEE) collection of unwanted/used plugs, batteries, kettles, toasters, TV’s, computers, electrical tools and toys.

Fidelity Investments - World Environment Day Event

As part of their World Environment Day celebration in 2020, Fidelity’s Green Team organised an environmental themed webinar for their staff in partnership with Business in the Community Ireland. The webinar included a talk by an ecologist on the importance of biodiversity and practical actions people can take in their own lives. A number of Fidelity employees shared stories of environmentally friendly actions they have taken in their own lives including installing rainwater collection devices in their house, converting an old garden shed into a hen-house and purchasing an electric vehicle. The event wrapped up with an interactive quiz using Zoom polls where employees had to decide which common household products were recyclable or not.

SSE and Business in the Community Ireland’s Business Action on Education Programmes

SSE have been collaborating with BITCI’s employability programmes for a number of years through their SSE Works’ project which provides work placements to NEET individuals (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) and who have faced long-term barriers to accessing work. Due to the disruptions of the Covid crisis, it was not possible to deliver this programme in person last year. However, rather than abandoning the programme all together, SSE decided to use a Biodiversity Training Programme that they had developed as part of Wind Farm Development for local communities and deliver it to clients from BITCI’s Employment Programmes. The training was a great success as it was very helpful for clients who wished to work in the environmental sector or upskilling others on the importance of biodiversity.

Veolia Sustainable Workplace Behaviours Training

In 2021 Veolia partnered with Vyra to roll out micro-learning for their staff on sustainability issues. Vyra is an employee engagement tool focused on sustainability education and action. Through Vyra's platform, entire teams in Veolia participated and competed in short, challenge-focused learning modules for sustainability. The Vyra training explored topics such as Carbon Foot-printing, E-Waste, Fast Fashion etc.

AbbVie Eco Challenge

AbbVie Eco challenge is a virtual event, launched on Earth Day for their global community of advocates and changemakers. In 2020, over the course of 3.5 weeks, 2,200 colleagues from 36 different countries participated and completed over 48,100 sustainable actions to reduce energy, water and waste

Intel - Sustainable Kildare

Sustainable Kildare is a yearlong climate action programme for businesses led by County Kildare Chamber and Global Action Plan (GAP) and sponsored by Intel. There are two key objectives of the programme:

- To help change your employee's lifestyle habits to help reduce personal emissions and;
- To support your business on its sustainability journey.

Employees take part in a 3-week Climate Action challenge using the Ducky App that allows them to track their personal emissions and compete against fellow employees and other businesses in Kildare on the topic of Climate Change. Three challenges will be run over the course of the programme in October 2021, February 2022 and will culminate in the final challenge Championship in May 2022.

Tips for Employees on how to live a more sustainable lifestyle

As more and more organisations are giving employees the opportunity to work from home, this is a good opportunity to promote sustainability at home. There is a growing consensus that climate challenges need to be tackled by all of society, so individual actions in a small way can help Ireland reach our global climate goals. Here are some top tips which businesses can share with their employees:

1. Recycling – Follow the waste Hierarchy

Fact: Plastic production accounts for a similar share of global oil consumption as the aviation industry (6% approximately). While it can be argued that plastic is a useful material, the abundance of single use plastic (SUP) represents an environmentally inefficient use of resources.

What can I do?

- Adhere to the waste hierarchy – Prevent> Reuse>Recycle>Recover>Dispose. With prevention of waste being an ideal scenario with the option to reuse, recycle or recover being considered before disposal.
- Be more conscious about what can and cannot be recycled – Then recycle these items in the correct manner (avoid contaminating recycling streams).
- Consider the issue of single use plastics & coffee cups, two key waste items.
- Try going paper free at the office, or printing double sided on FSC certified paper
- Add plastic/waste free or take back programs to contracts/RFPs to promote a more circular economy
- Utilise battery and packaging take back programs at your local businesses

2. Diet – Adoption of a Flexitarian Diet

Fact: Ahead of electricity, transport and residential, the sector which contributes most to Ireland’s GHG emissions, is the agricultural sector (32% EPA, 2016) with the majority of this being because of the release of methane gasses from livestock.

What can I do?

- Be more conscious of our diets and particularly our meat intake. Such a dependence on this livestock for diet is unsustainable, with the 2018 EAT-Lancet report recommending a healthy and sustainable “Flexitarian diet” which is mostly plant based, with 14g a day of red meat and 29g a day of chicken and one glass of milk per day advised. This diet would reduce the necessity for the intensive livestock farming that is so taxing on the environment in terms of both GHG emissions and resources (land, water, govt. funding etc.)
- When making lunches or purchasing for the office try and source local and organic
- Switch from water coolers to regular tap water

3. Clothing/Furniture –Buy second hand or wear it at least 30 times

Fact: While exact figures are often not reported on by government bodies (stats come typically through news rather than policy as it’s a hot topic issue but not really policy relevant), the fashion industry represents a significant impactor of GHG emissions with Forbes (2015) estimating the contribution as high as 10%. The industry also incentivizes unsustainable crop management processes, causes significant water pollution issues and is rife with human rights concerns along the supply chain. Many of these issues stem from the sub-industry know as fast fashion which involves bringing catwalk trends to the high street at low prices with the clothes being discarded when the new trends come in.

What can I do?

- Where possible the environmentally conscious choice would be to avoid the industry by shopping second hand.
- When shopping first-hand people should be mindful of the brand they shop with – the app good on you provides a ranking of all popular brands on human rights, animal rights and sustainability and an overall ranking out of 5.
- When buying new, be sure to only do so on the promise to wear the item at least 30 times to avoid the issues of clothes being bought, never worn, and thrown to landfill caused by the fast fashion culture.
- For surplus office furniture and equipment identify local solutions for reuse
- Ensure an e-waste and battery recycling program is in place
- For office furniture/carpets/equipment ensure to implement a take back programs to contracts/RFPs to promote a more circular economy

4. Home Energy – Older homes and homes with poor energy performance should avail of SEAI retrofit grants & Green Financing options

Fact: Irish homes require 7% more energy than the EU average and emit 58% more Carbon Dioxide. This is partially down to the Irish housing stock and while new builds typically perform well, those not built this century are not compatible with 2030 climate related targets. The government's 2019 climate action plan suggested plans to provide grants so as to retrofit 500,000 homes to a B2 Building Energy Rating.

What can I do?

- The ESRI (2017) suggested that the best value for money in terms of deep retrofitting could be found in attic insulation, cavity wall insulation and instillation of heating controls.
- Obtain the services of professionals to provide a quote on what energy efficiency measures you can apply to your home to provide you with a B2 rating. SEAI are now
- Switch to LED bulbs and turn off when not in use
- When purchasing new home/office equipment ensure to choose items with A energy rating and buy Irish where possible
- Prevent energy wastage at home and work by eliminating drafts, closing doors/windows, adjusting the thermostat for thermal comfort and energy efficiency, turn appliances off when not in use

5. Electricity – Use a Green Electricity Provider

Fact: The way the electricity market works is that low-cost fuels (renewables) are used until exhausted at which point inexpensive fossil fuels (natural gas) and then finally more expensive fossil fuels (Coal/oil) are used. The inexpensive renewables are variable in terms of supply given they typically rely on weather and are more difficult to store. Green electricity packages allow the user to pay a premium to ensure only clean energy is used to fuel their home with this premium used to guarantee renewables in periods of low supply and inevitably fund ways of making renewables more reliable and user consistent as well.

What can I do?

- Look into changing your energy provider to a company offering renewable energy options.
- Work alongside building management team to tailor heating, lighting and hot water needs to the schedule of occupants
- Adapt thermal comfort to occupants needs for different seasons
- APPS such as DEPOP allow you to wear

6. Transport – Avoid driving to work

Fact: Transport accounts for the largest share of Irelands energy related CO2 emissions (39%) and 19.8% or Irelands emissions overall. Road transport accounts for the vast majority of this (95% in 2015) with the overall emissions growing faster than in any other sector.

What can I do?

- Electric Vehicles will form the backbone of the government's attempts to slow down this growth however they remain a costly option and a more long-term solution than an individual behaviour change.
- Individuals might consider changing their commuting patterns to more sustainable practices where possible. Walking and cycling remain carbon neutral alternatives to the individual motor car and public transport reduces the carbon contribution of your commute by spreading it among fellow passengers.
- Avail of the bike to work scheme
- Car share

7. Vote

Fact: Individual behavioural changes can make some impact, but within all of the suggested changes there are structural and policy decisions governments could make to make these more attractive and impactful, as well as overall social structural changes that are necessary for Ireland to achieve the goals of the Climate Action Plan.

What can I do?

- By voting and engaging with the democratic process you can elect people keen to make these changes or hold those that don't to account.

8. Calculate your Carbon Footprint

Fact: The residential sector saw a 9% increase in carbon emissions in 2020 which can be attributed to mass work from home during COVID-19.

What can I do? Why not calculate your personal carbon footprint? What you can measure you can better manage. This can easily be done online using either of these free browser carbon calculators:

- [Carbon Footprint](#) (requires energy bills)
- [Friends of the Earth Ireland](#) (does not require bills)

9. Biodiversity

Fact: Globally we are facing an unprecedented biodiversity crisis, indeed in Ireland alone one in every fifth species is at a threat of extinction. We also know that there are many health benefits to human interactions with plants.

What can I do? Employee biodiversity initiatives can have a multitude of benefits to the individual and the environment.

- Support local/community gardens or set up your own
- Understand your impacts and dependencies on biodiversity
- Introduce a green gardening program- no pesticides, planting of native species, battery operated gardening equipment
- Make the switch from manicured lawns to wildflower gardens/meadows
- Indoor/rooftop gardens for employee green spaces

10. Digital Pollution

Fact: Digital pollution encompasses three elements: manufacturing, practices, and e-waste. Digital pollution is responsible for 3.7% of CO2 emissions globally – 50% more than air transport (2.4%). The mobile phones used in the 1960s were made of just 10 components, while each of today's smartphones are composed of approximately 54. Our digital culture is dependent on data centres, servers, undersea optic fibre cables, relay antennas, wi-fi boxes and much more, all of which process every little action you perform online. Each time a search query is performed, the carbon footprint generated and released into the atmosphere from this action amounts to about 0.9 g of CO2, and each web page that remains open must continuously connect to its server

What can I do? Some of the actions we can all take to reduce our digital carbon footprint include

- Unsubscribe from newsletters you don't read
- Avoid sending images where possible. Use online tools such as WeTransfer, or an internal link can be provided to the folder where the picture is located
- Save websites frequently visited on your favourites tab
- Click in your history browser to access a site directly
- Type the URL directly into the address bar when you know it
- Watch videos in lower resolution
- Think twice before scrolling through videos on social media
- Turn off cameras during meetings when appropriate
- Delete emails and files where appropriate, and avoid duplications of files

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