



Environmental & Sustainability Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this environmental policy is to indicate our organisational commitment to addressing environmental issues within Interest Link and through the services we deliver. This document outlines what Interest Link will do to identify our environmental impact, how we will adapt to reduce our impact, and the responsibilities of team members in this space.

Scope

This policy applies to employees and contractors, both full time and part time. The policy will be shared with suppliers, potential partners and consultants wherever appropriate to indicate our commitment to environmental action.

Action

Interest Link is committed to accelerating a just transition to net zero and reducing the impact on the environment from our operations and service delivery. We will address this through the following areas of work:

Staff engagement

We will promote responsibility for the environment within the organisation, and communicate and implement this policy at all levels of our team. We commit to ensuring key members of staff have the time necessary to embed this work into our operations and providing further resource where possible and necessary.

We will encourage and support staff to set up a staff climate working group for those with a personal or professional interest in the area, making sure that this group is representative of all levels of the organisation.

We will support staff wellbeing by considering how we promote positive, action-led messaging about climate breakdown and provide opportunities for them to change the ways they work for Interest Link in line with positive climate behaviours. We will provide space for staff to discuss this issue, including their own concerns and worries about environmental breakdown, through any wider wellbeing programmes in place.

Interest Link will:

- Share its expectation of responsibility for the environment to employees, board members and secretariat service providers.

- Demonstrate clear commitment to the environment and lead by example, to ensure that the protection of the environment is promoted to all employees.
- Support team wellbeing and work to combat hopelessness by committing to driving action in the organisation, and setting a positive example.

The employees of Interest Link will:

- Be familiar with all the environmental requirements relevant to their role and responsibilities, including exploring the carbon footprint/environmental impact of specific areas of work;
- take responsibility for their own impact on the environment while [in the workplace/working from home], sharing ideas with other staff members on how to reduce personal impact.

The board will:

- Recognise that climate breakdown is a strategic and systemic risk challenging the charity's ability to meet its objectives in the long term;
- Support senior management and the wider staff team in addressing climate breakdown.

Operations

As part of delivering our mission in line with our values and charitable objectives, we will assess the environmental impacts of our operations and set objectives in order to improve our internal carbon emissions. This will include:

- Monitoring utilities consumption in office buildings and home working
- Promoting, encouraging and rewarding green travel choices
- Conscious consideration of the amount of travel necessary for our services to go ahead, encouraging green transportation modes and/or providing remote access to events
- Review our waste and educate employees about effective recycling and reducing use of single use plastic where possible
- Communicate with the communities we work with about climate breakdown and how it is relevant to our mission, vision and values
- Generally increase communications about the climate crisis, to encourage awareness within our networks and the communities we work with
- Comply with all relevant environmental legislation and regulations

A list of practical actions that can be taken is attached as an Appendix

Governance

We commit to exploring on an annual basis the impact climate breakdown will have or is having on the communities we work with. This work should include, for example:

- Making time to discuss practical strategic actions at one board meeting per year.
- Providing a short statement in our annual report each year outlining the discussions we have had around climate breakdown and any action we have taken, alongside our aims for the following year.

- Reviewing our investment policy and seeking to move to ethical funds wherever possible in line with Charity Commission guidance on balancing ethical investment and financial return.

Suppliers and procurement

The suppliers of Interest Link will work with us to reduce the impacts of the goods and services purchased from them wherever possible.

We recognise that although we may not be able to reject suppliers based solely on their sustainability credentials that asking questions raises the profile of this issue, and that we may partly influence behaviours through this action alone. Our engagement with suppliers is designed to identify suppliers with values which align with our own, and we will make public our preference to work with organisations who minimise their environmental impact wherever possible.

Appendix: Practical Actions

1 - Materials and Resources.

1. Consider installing recycling bins in office and/or at events.
2. When ordering stationery, fundraising resources etc, do so in bulk. It costs less and reduces transport costs.
3. Where practicable buy products manufactured from recycled waste.
4. Rather than printing leaflets, posters, fundraiser packs, etc create digital versions - not only more eco friendly, these are also easier to share and cost less.
5. Use eco friendly suppliers.
6. Unused or single copied paper should be recycled as scrap paper.
7. Double sided printing and back to back photocopying should be undertaken where practicable.
8. Don't automatically print e-mails and documents. Retaining them on the hard drive reduces toner and paper usage, and you can find them again, if you need to.
9. Make use of e-mail in preference to hard copy mail.
10. Encourage the use of water in jugs at meetings rather than plastic water bottles.
11. Where water dispensers are provided, consider installing those that draw and cool mains water, rather than bottled supplies.
12. Where possible encourage the use of fair-trade tea and coffee, and other products.
13. If it is practicable rechargeable batteries should be used, this is both economical and is far better for the environment.
14. Don't buy fruit/vegetables pre-packed – it's more expensive and creates plastic waste.
15. When you do buy loose fruit/vegetables, leave them loose and don't use plastic bags.
16. Buy UK, ideally local, instead of overseas produced food (and other materials) and try to buy in-season foods – it's cheaper, healthier, reduces air miles and supports local businesses.
17. If you do need to use disposable plates/cutlery at an event, buy cardboard, not plastic.

2 - Managing Waste.

1. Where cost effective, every effort should be made to recycle waste, such as cardboard, glass, paper and plastics.
2. Mobile phone, and toner and cartridge recycling can generate some income.
3. Include energy efficiency in your purchasing of electronic equipment - you'll use less energy, when you use them, and less waste when you dispose of them.
4. Hazardous items, such as oils, chemicals, fluorescent tubes, batteries etc, and electrical items must be disposed of properly and not simply dumped in the bin.
5. Encourage the use of effective environmentally friendly cleaning products and other products such as e-cloths.

3 - Energy Use.

1. When reviewing utilities, try to purchase renewable energy.
2. Ensure that everyone is aware of the benefits of energy efficient systems including benefits to themselves in their own homes

3. Energy efficient lighting should be used to replace any tungsten bulbs.
4. People should be encouraged to turn off lights, televisions, monitors and other equipment when not in use. It's more environmentally friendly, saves money and helps reduce fire risk.
5. Where practicable, heating should be turned down or off in unoccupied rooms or areas, with heating reduced to 'frost protection' levels when unoccupied; eg Christmas.
6. Ensure that doors and windows are not left open after ceasing work to save on heating costs and improve security.
7. Doors and windows should be draught proofed where practicable, loft spaces checked to ensure insulation is adequate, and pipes and hot water tanks should be properly lagged.

4 - Water Use.

1. Turn off or repair dripping taps, which can waste up to 10,000 litres of water a year.
2. Cut down on the amount of water in toilet cisterns by placing a water-filled bottle in there or a bag filled with stones.
3. In hot weather turning the tap on to gain access to colder water can be wasteful; therefore a jug of the water run should be filled and placed in the fridge.

5 - Emissions and Transport.

1. Where practicable, staff should use public transport.
2. Encourage shared transport use by staff, members and volunteers where it is practicable.
3. Source goods and services locally, where this is cost effective.
4. Coordinate meeting timings and locations to minimise travel.
5. Review the work of meetings to reduce committee sizes and frequency of meetings and hold meetings online where possible. It cuts travel, can save wasted work time and is always popular.
6. Avoid automatic attendance at meetings on every occasion and, instead staff should only attend when an active role is required.