The Net-Zero challenge for tourism enterprises

Authors: Anita Conefrey* (anita.conefrey@research.atu.ie)(ATU Sligo), Dr James Hanrahan (ATU Sligo), Dr Domhnall Melly (ATU Sligo), Dr John Carty (ATU Galway), Dr Conor McTiernan (ATU Donegal) & Dr Deirdre Bryne (ATU Sligo).

Thank you to the tourism enterprises that participated in this study, which captured major variations in climate action and decarbonisation practices being implemented at a national level in the Republic of Ireland. As you are aware, Ireland is obliged to reach emission targets by 2030 and Net-Zero emissions before 2050. Additionally, all organisations are now required to report their environmental and social impacts – under the new EU 'Corporate Sustainability Reporting' directive established in 2022. Hence, this research identified the level of skills and training required to transition the Irish tourism industry towards Net-Zero emissions. The preliminary results are outlined below to aid tourism enterprises in making evidence-informed decisions on climate action and the areas that need to be upskilled and trained for a decarbonised world.



When tourism enterprises meet the Net–Zero challenge they become resource efficient, reduce operating costs and increase profits, which enables them to actively support communities and destinations. However, this transition requires direct financial investment, as the burden of decarbonising tourism cannot be placed entirely on the enterprises, especially after a difficult time with COVID–19 and the war in Ukraine. For enterprises to transition smoothly towards Net–Zero emissions, there needs to be significant support and training opportunities in place like there are for other industries.

Sample of tourism enterprises that participated

Stakeholder group represented Participants position in enterprise 35% Accommodation 35% **Employee** 25% Food & beverage 23% Manager **Owner** 19% **Transport** 14% Supervisor 19% **Attraction** 10% Team leader Activity provider/ 6% 2% tour operator Retail 6% Consultancy 1%

Basic level of climate action literacy

Are you aware of the 51% reduction target by 2030?

Do you understand the term climate change?

Do you understand the term carbon emissions?

Do you agree that tourism has role in decarbonisation?

81%
100%
93%
88%

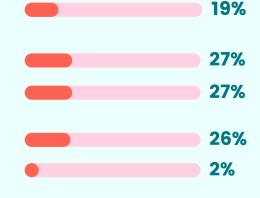
Decarbonisation support, training & skills

Have you applied for grants to support the enterprise to transition towards Net-Zero emissions before 2050?

Are you aware of any external decarbonisation training?

Have you completed any training on how to implement decarbonisation actions?

Do you provide decarbonisation training to your staff? When hiring employees, do you seek decarbonisation



Top 3 skills that you believe are required in your enterprise to support decarbonisation

Climate action/ sustainability awareness & literacy

Training, education & experience in decarbonisation practices

Environmental/ waste management experience



Does your enterprise currently have a decarbonisation action plan?



action plan

skills?



14% are implementing some decarbonisation actions but they are not embedded in a plan



8% do not know



3% have a decarbonisation action plan







What decarbonisation of	actions have you
implemented in you	
Recycling	48%
Reducing food waste	46%
Reducing solid waste	45%
Reducing water waste	40%
Local sourcing	39%
Plant-based menu options	22%
Using renewable energy sources (PC, SP, WT etc.)	20%
Strict policy on turning off equipment	20%
Appointed sustainability officer/ manager	17%
Eliminating unnecessary lights	16%
Eliminating unnecessary plastics	14%
Labelled bins clearly using images	14%
Decarbonisation guidance & training for staff	14%
Reduced emissions	14%
Observe staff energy use, to make changes	— 13%
On/Off checklists for equipment	— 13%
Upgraded/switched boiler	9%
Stock rotation system	9%
Consult with energy providers to reduce costs &	7%
consumption	
Investing in the conservation of biodiversity	7%
Behavioural adaptions	7%
Measuring & monitoring emissions	7%
Integrating reusable items	6%
Support employees to decarbonise	5 %
Working towards a specific certification	5 %
Purchasing from decarbonised suppliers	5 %
Free water station	5%
Biodiversity Plan (signed pollinator pledge)	4%
Investing in technology-based solutions	4%
Bike racks & maintenance tools available	4%
Rainwater collection	4%
Consider product life-cycle when purchasing	3 %
Reviewing products to make them sustainable	3%
Participate in wider community initiatives	3%
More fuel efficient/electric transportation	3%
Interim emission reduction target (2030)	3 %
Reforestation	2%
Internal carbon policy	2%
Installed electric car charging points	2%
Offering/supporting more sustainable trips	1%
Demarketing / rethinking marketing efforts	1%
Urban/building improvements	
Compensation of emissions internally	1%
Compensation of emissions externally	0%
Develop new low-carbon products	0%

Do you engage your visitors in any of the following decarbonisation initiatives?



Recycling bins available 31% Bicycles available on site 11% Electric car charging on site 10% Climate education/information 7% 5% Offer low carbon alternatives 2% Measure customer satisfaction Discounts/rewards for efficient transport 2% 1% Offer offsetting option Discounts/rewards for low-energy use 1% Discounts/rewards for sustainable options 0% Climate change levy/surcharge 0%

Barriers faced when transitioning towards Net-Zero

Initial financial costs

Lack of
government
support,
guidelines,
incentives & best
practice

Difficult to initiate cultural change or train staff

Society not buying in

makers are not making sustainability a priority

Decision

Limited human resources

Time consuming





