



## Today at a Glance

**10:05 Room2: Sustainability Story** - Aine Finnegan (room2 Hometel)

10:15 Tourism NI Setting the Scene - Eimear Callaghan (Tourism NI)

10:30 Why it Matters: The Power of Sustainable Tourism - Tina O'Dwyer (Tourism Space)

**10:55 Panel Discussion: Place** – Terry McCartney (Belmore Court & Motel), Pauline Carey (The Boatyard Distillery) and Jac Callan (Visit Belfast)

11:30 Comfort Break (20 minutes)

11:55 Collaboration & 'Share Your Story' – Nikki McQuillan (Ulster University)

**12:05 Bringing your Sustainability Story to Life** - Tina O'Dwyer (The Tourism Space)

**12:25 Panel Discussion: Storytelling** - Laura Bradley (Indie Füde), Sinead Mackle (Armagh Observatory) and Melanie Harrison (The Harrison)

12:55 Closing Comments - Carolyn Boyd, Tourism NI Industry Development Manager

12:30 Networking Lunch









## **NISRA 2024**



Northern Ireland Tourism Performance Jan-Dec 2024

At A Glance



4.7m **Trips** 

-13% vs 2023



14.9m **Nights** 

-9% vs 2023



£1.1bn

Spend

-10% vs 2023

Average Spend per Trip

£233.05

+4% vs 2023

Average Spend per Night

£73.18

On par with 2023

Average Length of Stay

3.2 Nights

+0.1 nights vs 2023



Proportions may not equal 100% due to rounding.



Source: NISRA

Figures relate to overnight trips only.

## **Tourism in Northern Ireland Impact**

70,384

Tourism jobs supported in



NI in **2022** 

(+8% vs 2021)

70%



Total tourism jobs supported

located outside Belfast in 2022

5,845 Highest on record



Tourism businesses in NI in 2023

(+5% vs 2021)

77%



Total tourism businesses located

outside Belfast in 2023



## **Tourism Vision & Action Plan**







## Tourism Northern Ireland Strategic Framework 2025/28

Republic of Ireland trips on	<ol> <li>Regional Balance: a balance between urban, rural, and coastal destinations - ensuring that investment and economic activity is spread broadly across Northern Ireland, and not overly concentrated in the capital city of Belfast and a concentration of honeypot areas</li> </ol>					
Five Strategic Objectives:	Regional Balance is not about displacement - it is about generating new growth.  2. Good Jobs: secure, flexible, rewarding employment with supportive employers, offering opportunities for skills development and career progression where wellbeing is valued.					
	3. Productivity: a competitive tourism industry that offers a compelling proposition, is innovative, and maximises resources and the potential of our assets throughout the year.					
	4. Sustainability: a tourism industry that is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.					
	5. Strong Organisational Capability: Tourism NI is an effective, diverse, innovative and impactful organisation for which people are proud to work.					
Through the development and marketing of:	An internationally compelling destination focusing on our Landscape, Heritage, History & Culture and world class Food & Drink offer					
Resulting in:	Visitors Staying Longer, Spending More, All Year Round, Across the Region					
Enabled by:	All Island Collaboration	Insights and Data Analytics	Industry Capacity Building			
	Local Network Building	Supportive Policy Environment	Supporting Sales Growth			
	Strategic Leadership through Stake-	Product Development	Stimulating Consumer Demand			

## **Challenging Operating Environment**

1: Cost of doing business

**2: VAT** 

3: Staff

**4: Consumer Sentiment** 

**5: Geopolitics** 



### Why does Sustainability Matter?

### 1: Global Sustainability Priority

- critical focus in global tourism, accelerated by the pandemic

#### 2: Northern Ireland Tourism Vision

-sustainability is integrated in our Tourism Vision & Action Plan

#### **3: Climate Change Legislation Targets**

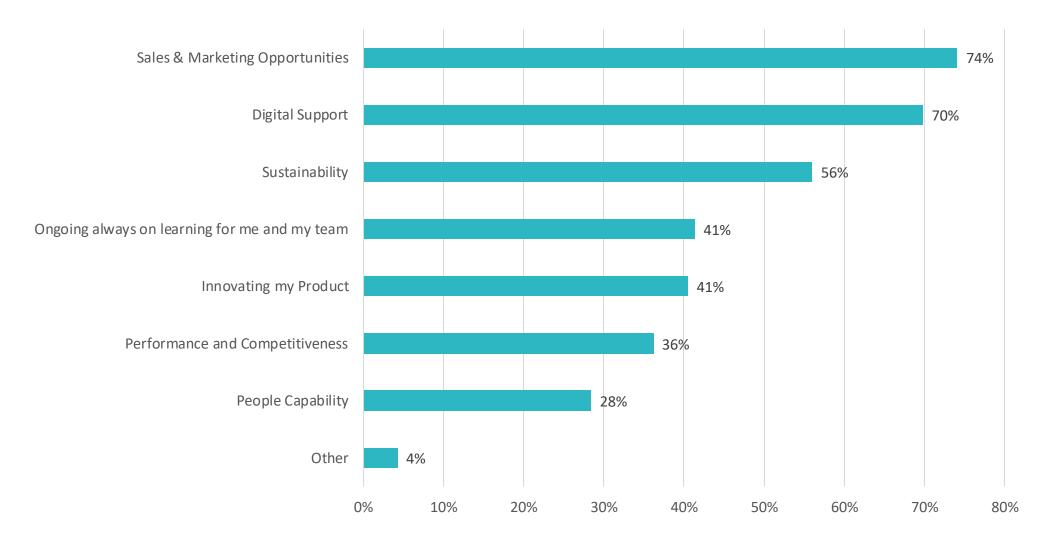
The 2022 Climate Change Act mandates net zero greenhouse emissions by 2050 and a 48% reduction by 2030, urging tourism businesses to act.

NI Energy Strategy – Pathway to Netzero

#### 4: Benefits of Sustainable Practices

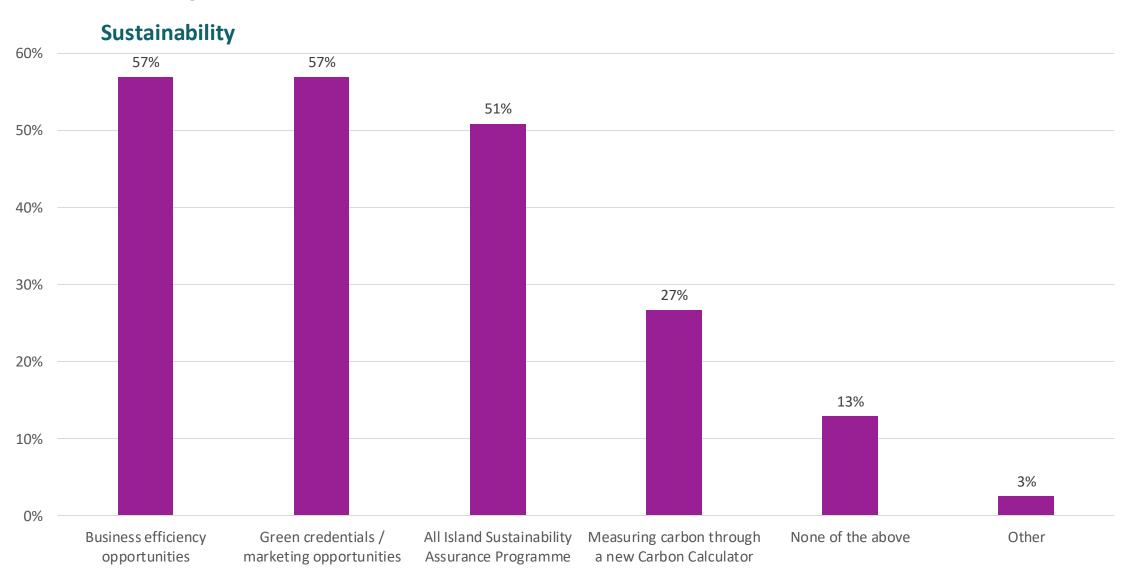
Adopting sustainability in tourism enhances efficiency, reduces costs, and a traenvironmentally conscious visitors.

## Sustainability is an industry priority also



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## What industry want to know



Need to broaden our understanding.

Sustainability in a tourism context is more than just energy saving and recycling.

It's also about visitor management and supporting communities.



# THE 17 GOALS



**Department of Economic and Social Affairs**Sustainable Development





# Sustainability matters to Visitors

#### **Growing Demand for Sustainability**

 Over half of global travelers now consider travel's impact on communities and the environment.

### **Sustainability Influences Destination Choice**

 More than two-thirds of travelers from Northern Ireland and ROI prioritize sustainability when choosing destinations.

#### **Barriers to Sustainable Travel**

• Cost remains a major barrier, with 60% citing expense as a deterrent to sustainable tourism.

#### **Positive Perceptions of Northern Ireland**

 Half of overseas consumers see Northern Ireland as a sustainable holiday choice and support public transport use.



## Sustainability matters to Businesses

- Rising Operational Costs
- Demand for Sustainability Support
- Strategic Business Advantages
  - Adopting sustainable practices helps businesses improve resilience, competitiveness, and meet consumer expectations.
- Structured Sustainability Initiatives
  - Initiatives include accredited learning programmes and Carbon Calculators to drive practical sustainable actions.



## **Our Sustainable Tourism Pathway**

- ✓ Recognises need to support tourism businesses
- ✓ Practical & intuitive
- √ Tailored to business need
- ✓ Addresses varying knowledge levels & starting points
- ✓ Understands business objectives & needs
- ✓ Provides clarity in an uncertain environment
- **✓** Provides clear roadmap to sustainable progress



# Our Sustainable Tourism Pathway

Step 2
MyTourismNI
p 1

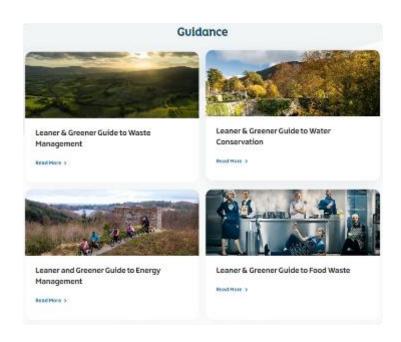
Step 3
Sustainable
Tourism
Business
Programme

Step 4
Graduate
Programme

Step 5
Carbon
Calculator

Step 1
Leaner &
Greener

# Step 1 Leaner & Greener



- ✓ Open to all
- ✓ Tourism.com
- ✓ Intro to Sustainable Tourism
- ✓ Creating Sustainable Experiences

#### Sustainability



Sustainable Tourism

What is sustainable tourism?

read more >

Sustainable Tourism

Who are green tourists?

read more 3





Sustainable Tourism

Ideas and inspiration

read more >



read more >



Sustainable Tourism

Sustainability Toolkit

read more 3



# Step 1 Leaner & Greener

- ✓ Toolkits on Energy,Water, Waste &Food waste
- ✓ NI Commitment to Climate Change
- ✓ Biodiversity



Step 2
MyTourismNI

**MyTourismNI: New E Learning Modules** 



# Step 2 MyTourismNI

# **MyTourismNI: New E Learning Modules**

#### Now live!

- ✓ NI's Commitment to Climate Change
  Course Duration: 1 hour: 5 modules
- ✓ Energy Management

Course Duration: : modules

✓ Waste Management
Course Duration: 1 hour: 4 modules

## **Coming Soon**

- ✓ Jan 26: Water Management
- ✓ Feb 26: Food Waste Management
- ✓ March: Threats to Biodiversity







## Sustainable Tourism Business Programme

A comprehensive 12-module industry programme to support tourism businesses in embedding cost-saving sustainable initiatives for their business as well as enhancing their storytelling, accessibility and join a growing cohort of sustainable-focused businesses across the destination.

- 5 x TNI cohorts to date
- 2 x Cuilcagh Geopark cohorts
- 76 unique businesses
- 93% outside of BCC region



**Armagh Banbridge Craigavon** 



**Ards & North Down** 

1 2 3

# LEANER & GREENER

Reduce costs and carbon through managing waste, water and energy

## BETTER & BRIGHTER

Help your business and your visitor to make the world a better place

## LOUDER & PROUDER

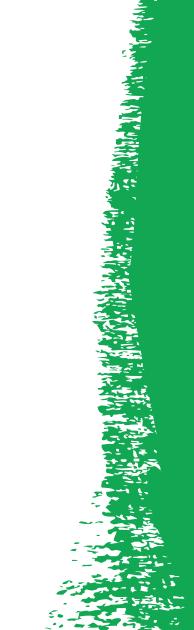
Communicate and market your sustainable and responsible practices

## Programme Structure – 3 Strands

## Positive Programme Evaluation

EVALUATION QUESTION	COHORT 2	COHORT 3	COHORT 4
Improved understanding of sustainable tourism	100% strongly agree	100% strongly agree	100% strongly agree
Improved ability to implement a sustainable action plan	100% strongly agree	100% strongly agree	100% strongly agree
Overall evaluation of programme	90% strongly agree	100% excellent	100% excellent





**Step 4**Graduate
Programme

A dedicated programme to continue to build support & momentum for businesses, championing and growing cohort of like-minded sustainable-focused tourism businesses across the destination.

Learning focuses on more advanced & topical learning.



- ✓ Open to all graduates
- ✓ Now in Year 2
- ✓ Webinars: Mon 26th Jan & Wed 11th March
- ✓ Celebration Event: 26th February

# Step 5 Carbon Calculator

#### What is this?

 Pilot Programme for industry specific Carbon Calculator

#### **Outcomes**

- Provide business support to sector to measure energy usage, water usage and waste.
- Provide destination insights & benchmarking
- If successful, wider industry roll out planned
- Partnership with NIHF & large visitor attractions

#### **Estimated Timeline**

- Dec /Jan Recruitment for participants
- Late Jan Intro Webinars
- Feb Mentoring sessions
- March Mentoring sessions





## **Invest NI Sustainability supports**

## **Sustainability Reports**

A Sustainability Report gives your business a clear, holistic view of its environmental performance.

The report will assess environmental performance across critical areas, including:

- Raw materials
- Energy
- Carbon
- Packaging
- Biodiversity
- Waste

#### **Benefits include:**

- Improved operational efficiency and cost savings
- Enhanced brand reputation through visible sustainability efforts
- Increased consumer trust and loyalty

# Who is eligible for Sustainability Report support?

Support is available to any business in Northern Ireland that meets the following criteria:

Annual energy and resource expenditure exceeds £30,000

#### Eligible costs may include:

- Heating costs
- Electricity bills
- Water usage charges
- Waste disposal expenses
- Raw material billings



## **Invest NI Sustainability supports**

## **Technical Consultancy**

Can help identify how your business can save energy, reduce waste and optimise the use of raw materials.

#### 9 technical consultancy specialist areas:

- Resource Efficiency and Waste Management Systems
- Efficient Technology/Processing Systems
- Renewable Technology Systems
- Energy Management and Efficiency
- Investigation of New Technologies
- Packaging Solutions
- Standards, Accreditations and Systems
- Transport & Logistics Efficiency
- Sustainable Business Collaborations

# Who is eligible for Technical Consultancy support?

The Technical Consultancy support is open to any business in Northern Ireland that has an annual energy resource spend in excess of £30,000. This could include the combined value of your heating, electricity, water, waste disposal or raw material billings.

#### For more information visit:

Reduce waste and save energy | Invest Northern Ireland



## Sustainability supports for your business

### **Consumer Council for Northern Ireland**

- Advice for small businesses on energy bills, tariffs and switching.
- Gas and electricity comparison tools

### **Power NI**

 Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme – 25/26 grant scheme now open for applications. Avail of 20% funding through Power NI for installation of energy saving products for your business.

## Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful - climate change training for SME's

- Carbon Literacy Course
- Climate Smart Training
- Climate Briefing



#### **Key Takeaways**

✓ Find your place on our Sustainable Tourism Pathway

- ✓ Review Leaner & Greener
- ✓ Start E Learning on MyTourismNI
- ✓ Look out for next recruitment of Sustainable Tourism Business Programme or the Pilot Carbon Calculator
- ✓ Commit time
- ✓ Develop a plan
- ✓ Keep in Touch!







## The Power of



## Sustainable Tourism





## Tina O'Dwyer

tina@thetourismspace.com



# 3 Angles



- 1.Trends
- 2.Travellers
- 3.Trust



# 1. Trends



#### Trends in Tourism



Meaningful experiences

Cool Tripping (connected and considered)

Slow and Deep

Local is luxury

Purpose and Profit (inherent)

### Trends in Sustainable Tourism

Sustainability is mainstreaming

Data and Transparency is growing

Regenerative principles are leading

The word 'sustainability' seen as a barrier





# Travellers seeking deeper meaning Destinations seeking deeper impact



# 2. Travellers



# Booking.com

2024

84% say travelling sustainably is important

93% What to make more sustainable choices

69% want to leave places better than they found them

73% want the money they spend to go back into local communities



### Meaning Seekers, not Sightseers

Identity-driven Travel

The Say-Do Gap

Aspire to Authenticity

Sustainability as Quality, not compromise

**Effortless Sustainability** 





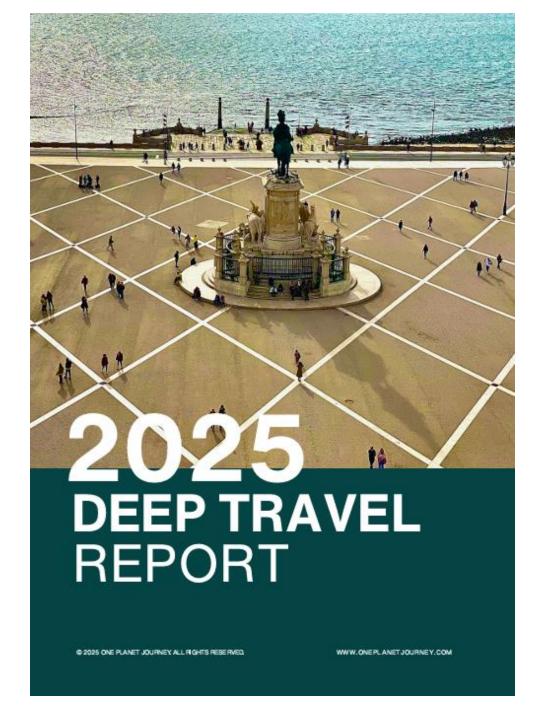
# The Sustainable Traveller



# The Sophisticated Traveller



# The Deep Traveller





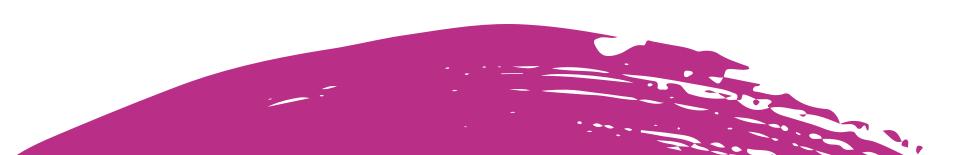


# 3. Trust



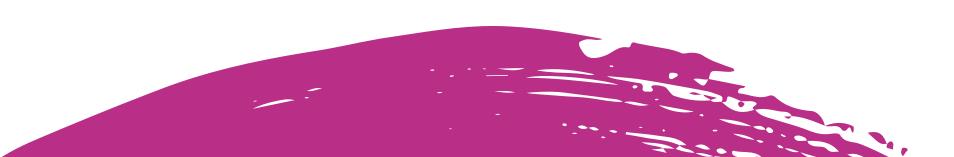


Clear, credible and consistent storytelling, using a variety of techniques and tools, is the greatest way to build and maintain trust





Clear, credible and consistent storytelling, using a variety of techniques and tools, is the greatest way to build and maintain trust











## Vast Number of Certification Options







Corporation



DESTINATIONS













**ECO** 



## Multiple Levels within most options



















## **Confusing Terminology**

#### Standard

A description of an activity or behaviour that demonstrates sustainable tourism practice.

There are many standards.

They are also called 'Criteria' or 'Indicators'.

#### Certification

Certification is a verification that a business or destination conforms to a set of standards, established through a voluntary, third-party assessment.

Those who offer certification are called Certification Bodies.

#### Accreditation

Accreditation is a formal recognition that a Certification Body is qualified to audit and certify according to certain standards.

A quality stamp for Certification Bodies

## Not clear who is in charge...







#### The EU Green Claims Directive

#### 2020 Research

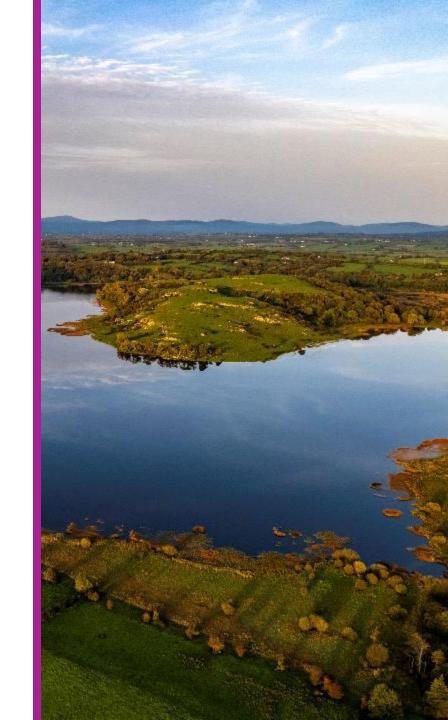
- More than 50% of claims were found to be misleading or unclear
- 40% had no support or evidence for their claim
- 88% consumers want to make more positive, sustainable choices.
- EU wants consumers to be able to make informed decisions based on trusted and accurate data





#### 'Green Claim':

Any communications from a business that state an environmental impact/benefit from a product or service"



#### **Implications**



- Evidence, and the support you have for that evidence, needs to be robust
- Unverified labels will no longer be accepted



#### The EU Green Claims Directive

## Paused!





#### What Certifiers do

- Define the set of standards that must be taken to achieve an award
- Provide tools, templates and roadmaps for applicants to support their sustainability journey
- Review applications and associated evidence to establish conformity with standard
- Audit the applicant, either remotely or on site, to verify conformity with standard
- ✓ Provide confirmation of certification with badges and logos



#### What Certifiers do

- Charge a fee for services
- Often offer complementary services such as training, consultancy, awards.
- ✓ Some Marketing and PR





## Main Challenges for Businesses

Costs

Money and Time

Gathering Data

Compiling Evidence

Re-Assessment Process

#### Remember...

Certifying Bodies are mostly private, commercial entities

Audits are important – if a Certification Body does not audit you, then they are not verifying you.

Certification Bodies are not marketing organisations. To get the most benefit, you need to do your own marketing.

While consumer and visitor awareness is low, trade awareness and demand is steadily growing.

Annual fees can be substantial – check what you are getting for your membership fee.

#### Some Certification Bodies in Ireland and UK















## Checklist for Selection

- Is it directly relevant to your business type?
- What other businesses use it?
- What countries use it or recognise it?
- How is it verified? How often?
- How much does it cost? To apply? For audit? Then annually?
- What time is involved?
- What supports are provided during application?
- Do your customers value it?
- Do your trade partners value it?

#### The Power of



## Sustainable Tourism





Trends moving towards meaning and inherent sustainability

Travellers aspiring to authentic connection and effortless sustainability

Success depends on Trust

#### The Power of



## Sustainable Tourism



#### Panel Discussion: Place

Terry McCartney, Belmore Court & Motel Pauline Carey, The Boatyard Distillery Jac Callan, Visit Belfast



### Royal Portrush Golf Club Sustainability Video





#### Comfort Break









# Sustainability Storytelling



xdfdfsd





## 5 Things to Think About

- 1. Remember stories matter more than claims
- 2. Tailor to who you're talking to
- 3. Make the Visitor the Hero
- 4. Tell the Bigger Story
- 5. 5 Top Tips



# 1. Stories matter more than claims



TED Tourism
Enterprise Development
Programme





# "Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell"

Seth Godin, Author and Entrepreneur



Greenhushing

TED Tourism
Enterprise Development
Programme

#### Greenwashing

Behaviour or activities that make people believe that a company is doing more to protect the environment than it actually is



#### Greenhushing

The practice where companies intentionally downplay or refrain from communicating their sustainability efforts or environmental goals (out of fear of criticism or backlash)



Greenflushing Greenlighting Greenwashing Greencrowdin Greenrinsing Greenmarking Greenpraising Greenhushing Greenspeakin g Tourism Enterprise Development Programme

#### Why do businesses hesitate?

- "Others know more than me who am I to talk about it?"
- "Who would listen? Does anybody really care?"
- "How would I word it? I don't have the language"
- "Customers don't really like change I wouldn't want a bad reaction"
- "Is 'sustainability' a kind of negative word?"
- "I haven't measured everything yet"
- "I'll wait until we have more done"



## Start telling your Sustainability Story in your own way NOW



TED Tourism
Enterprise Development
Programme





# 2. Tailor to who you're talking to

TED

Tourism Enterprise Development Programme



### 2 Distinct Audiences







2 Languages — 1 Story



#### Tools for Trade Storytelling

- > A detailed Sustainability Policy
- > A detailed Sustainability Action Plan
- > Focus on Data and Evidence
- Certifications
- Language: formal, detailed and convincing



#### Tools for Visitor Storytelling

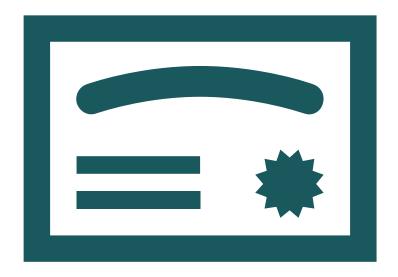


- A dedicated website page
- Social media activity
- Focus on people, place and purpose
- > Awards
- Language: personal, casual and compelling

#### Certifications

Third Party Verification that can provide the following benefits:

- 1. Credibility
- 2. Reputation
- 3. Competitive Advantage
- 4. Endorsement
- 5. Meeting potential new requirements



Can be expensive and time-consuming, difficult to know which one to work with.



## 3. Make the Visitor

## the Hero

TED

Tourism Enterprise Development Programme





## What do you want your visitor to do, feel and remember?















## What do you want your visitor to do, feel and remember?

They want you to help them live their values and feel good about their choices

 Questions about "climate anxiety" grew 4,590% in last five years  Questions about "climate anxiety" grew 4,590% in last five years

 More than half feel sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty

- Questions about "climate anxiety" grew 4,590% in last five years
- More than half feel sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty

 Fewer than 1 in 10 national CAPs include support for mental health

### "Hope is a marketing tactic"

Kate Webb, FoodCloud

# 4. Tell the Bigger Story of Your Place





## 5. Top Tips



TED Tourism
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Programme



People before Proof

Hope not Fear

Invitation over Announcement

The Extra-Ordinary

Let others do the talking for you

One consistent story told many ways

# Sustainability Storytelling







### Panel Discussion: Storytelling

Sinead Mackle, Armagh Planetarium Laura Bradley, Indie Füde Melanie Harrison, The Harrison Belfast



Killeavy Castle Hotel
Sustainability Video







#### More Tourism NI Industry Opportunities

20 <sup>th</sup> November	AI Check-in Webinar – Get Christmas Ready	Online	Registration Open
24 <sup>th</sup> November	Creating Powerful Marketing Collateral for your Experience Business	Online	Opening Soon *Exclusive to EAGS members
27 <sup>th</sup> November	Inclusive Recruitment in Tourism and Hospitality	Online	Registration Open
29 <sup>th</sup> January	Sustainable Storytelling	Online	Registration Opening Soon







### Spring 26 Programme

Coming Soon....

- > Al webinar series:
- > 15 January 2026 Transform your analytics with Al: From Data to Decisions
- > 10 February 2026 Al for Accessibility: Opening Tourism to Everyone
- **Innovate Tourism** 
  - **Regional Roadshows**
- Marketing Masterclass .
- Tourism Conference

- Sustainability Storytelling
- Make it Here webinar
  - **Luxury Tourism**



#### Al modules – Mytourismni.com



- Leveraging Online Reviews in Tourism
- Demand Forecasting For Tourism
- Features of ChatGPT
- Cash Flow Prediction With AI

Designed to help tourism businesses in Northern Ireland harness the power of artificial intelligence in practical, accessible ways. By the end you'll have a personalised Al roadmap to help you improve guest experiences, save time and make information decisions across your business.

- AI for Staff Training and Workforce Management
- Sentiment & Theme Analysis
- AI for Inclusive and Accessible Tourism
- Introduction to Canva AI for Tourism Businesses

Find out more at tourismni.com/mvtourismni



