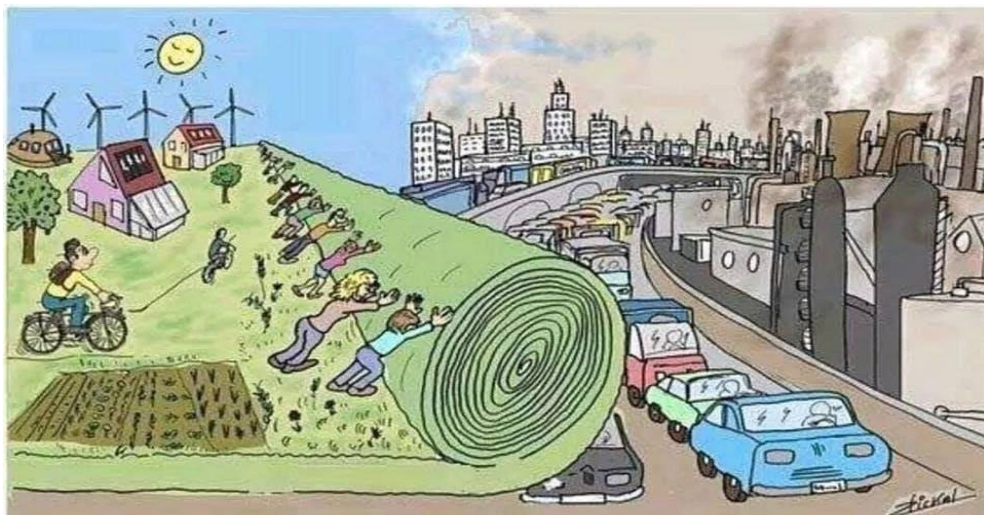




The
Environmental
FORUM

Strategic Plan 2026 -2028





The Environmental Forum

Strategic Plan 2026 -2028

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FOREWORD

The Environmental Forum (TEF) came into being in 1995 supported by Cork County Council as an instrument for applying the principles of Local Agenda 21/ now Agenda 2030, otherwise known as the Sustainable Development Goals, as agreed by the United Nations Global Conference on Environment and Development.

TEF's initial brief was to bring various stakeholders together at a local level throughout Cork city and county who would not ordinarily have occasion to meet to discuss local sustainability and environmental issues and agree on an appropriate action plan. Its raison d'être remains to foster, promote and implement sustainable development in the Cork region and beyond. TEF is an exemplar model that enshrines the ethos of local agenda 21 which recognised that all sectors share responsibility for the environment and opportunities must be developed for them to work in cooperation and agreement. Further supporting the notion that sustainable development can only be achieved by partnership with all stakeholders, sharing ideas, information and resources, consultation and taking joint action.

TEF's own structure and representation (at both membership and executive level) of the four pillars of society – **Business & Commercial, Public Sector, Community & Voluntary and Individuals** lends to collaboration and a way of working in partnership with all stakeholders. TEF is both an insider, sitting on local and national boards and committees and an outsider, tapping into local people's power and knowledge and influencing people's behaviour.

TEF stimulates environmental awareness and promotes individual and collective action among sectoral interests and individuals in Cork. TEF has been active in this role for over 25 years and through the many connections, networks, partnerships and links performs an important function in highlighting and progressing environmental care and protection and supporting the transition to a lower carbon more sustainable region.

TEF as an important connector and intermediary body builds on the shared public interest across all sectors in making our society and our city and county more sustainable. TEF evolves partnership actions that support climate change mitigation and adaptation, supports development of sustainable communities and helps people and groups to innovate and respond to environmental challenges and build resilience locally to assist the transition to a low carbon future.

Raising awareness, providing information and opportunities to engage in activities that support the achievement of the current Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (2015) is a key feature of our work. Particularly relevant to delivery of Education for Sustainable Development is the delivery of the Global Action Plan Greener Living Programme which in turn helps to engage, build understanding and motivate people and communities to take positive actions for more sustainable living.

The Environmental Forum is an independent company limited by guarantee with charitable status.

Local Agenda 21

Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the Statement of principles for the Sustainable Management of Forests were adopted by more than 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992.

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED, to monitor and report on implementation of the agreements at the local, national, regional and international levels. It was agreed that a five year review of Earth Summit progress would be made in 1997 by the United Nations General Assembly meeting in special session.

Local Action 21

Local Action 21 evolved from Local Agenda 21, it was agreed and signed up to at the *Johannesburg World Summit in 2002*, where over 500 representatives of Local Authorities from all over the World formally adopted this programme for implementation of sustainable development.

Jacqi Hodgson, TEF Coordinator, was a representative on the Irish delegation to the summit out of which evolved a strong focus on Local Action 21. ¹

Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Extract “18. *We are announcing today 17 Sustainable Development Goals with 169 associated targets which are integrated and indivisible. Never before have world leaders pledged common action and endeavour across such a broad and universal policy agenda.*” <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>



¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/outcomedocuments/agenda21>

TEF VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

VISION

We believe that a sustainable world will be one which prioritises and protects environmental quality, habitats and biodiversity, where consumption and economics take cognisance of the limitations of our one planet and where there is a fairer and more equitable share of the earth's resources

MISSION

Working for a better environment for all.

Through fostering, promoting and implementing Sustainable Development as defined by the Brundtland Commission 1987².

VALUES

Our core values are:

Inclusive

TEF works from a Local Agenda 21/ Agenda 2030 ethos fundamental to this is to facilitate the involvement of all sectors of society. We reflect this in our structure by having representation at management and membership levels from the Public, Private, Community & Voluntary and Individual Sectors.

Collaborative

We work in collaboration with a broad range of partners, valuing connections and relationships, in order to engage more people and communities and all sectors to work with us to protect and care for our environment.

Empowerment

Our approach is to empower participants in our activities through providing an appropriate level of information and opportunities to work with and meet others to build understanding of the difficulties our environment faces and to implement positive actions to address these at a local level.

Informed and Continually Learning

TEF sees the bigger picture through research, representation and links, and attendance and participation in relevant training, conferences and seminars. This informs our work on the UN Sustainable Development Goals/ Local Agenda 2030.

We instigate these values by our positive *can do attitude*, by being *solutions orientated* and by working both top down & bottom up to *link policy and behavioural change*.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM'S STRATEGIC GOALS

- 1. To raise awareness regarding the environment**
- 2. To facilitate action and behaviour change**
- 3. To shape and influence the development of pro-environmental policy.**
- 4. Maintain our cross-sectoral (public, private, NGO and community) collaborations that help us act and deliver a better environment for all.**
- 5. To instigate and support relevant projects that deliver solutions to environmental and cross-cutting challenges.**
- 6. To develop the capacity of organisation.**

Goal 1

To raise awareness regarding the environment

1. Education and training

Many paths to sustainability are mentioned in the 40 chapters of Agenda 21, the official document of the 1992 Earth Summit. Education is one of these paths. To strengthen this goal the UN declared 2005 – 2014 the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). The overall aim was to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. Education and training are an integral part of CEF's activities and we do this in many ways including:

- Global Action Plan Greener Living Training
- Workshops
- Seminars
- Pilot programmes e.g. GAP for Guesthouses, Community Climate Action Programme.
- Organise, contribute to and attend relevant conferences
- Engage and participate through opportunities such as Cork Lifelong Learning Festival, Growing Lifelong Learning in Cork.
- Promoting relevant courses with institutions such as UCC e.g. Sustainability Course

2. Creative ways to bring awareness

- Working with youth for St. Patrick's Day Parade
- Creative workshops on thematic areas e.g. Christmas decorations from 'waste' materials.
- Engage with Film Festivals e.g. French Film Festival, Indie Cork
- Create content that is creative e.g. biodiversity videos/ Prof. CEF/ graphic harvest
- Awards ceremony

3. Doing rather than just talking about change

- Mobility initiatives e.g. Rebel Pedal, Mix Your Mode, ParkletTree planting e.g. Millenium Forest, Tree Week & 1001 Acorn Project others such as Climate Pact Map my Tree
- Collaborative projects e.g. CFPC – Feeding the 5000/ Green Spaces – Food Forest/Parklet
- Citizen science – Coastwatch surveys/ campaigns / recording for the National Biodiversity Data Centre and promotion and engagement of others

4. Providing a forum for communication

- Our own structure and membership – members connect, social event such as Green Drinks, picnics in parks
- Newsletters, social media and articles for the Press.
- Fridays for Earth panel discussions, relevant film screenings and panel discussions e.g. Scotland: Our Climate Journey.
- Go to organisation to explore environmental perspectives and get advise on issues.
- Key founders of relevant campaigns and initiatives e.g. Cork Climate Action, Cork Sky Friendly Campaign, Transport and Mobility Forum and Nature Forum set up in 2022.

Goal 2

To facilitate action and behaviour change

1. Membership

The Environmental Forum is a membership based organisation and this is often the first step for people to become more involved and aware of environmental issues and to engage with others in discussing solutions and taking action together.

2. Reach people through community events

TEF attends many events in local communities which has a mutual benefit of being aware what communities are doing and how people might become even more involved in actions to protect and restore the environment.

3. Supporting community groups TEF already works with to influence policy

With our membership and groups we already work with we can disseminate information and also harness information about issues of concern for local communities as well as a forum to discuss aspects of a consultation and what issues need to be included in submissions.

4. Support people to make complaints on environmental damaging activities

This is an increasing area of work. In order to empower people we are working in developing templates & case studies.

5. Being accessible and being responsive to community groups

Visit projects and discuss potentials/ pathways, work with groups through collaborations e.g. VOICE/SECAD training and actions e.g. Carrigaline/ Skibbereen

Goal 3

To shape and influence the development of pro-environmental policy.

One of the initial tasks of TEF focused on when it set up was the compilation of its [Position Papers](#) – our policy perspectives, with input from academics, relevant experts and TEF members, on a whole range of thematic areas.

Responding to consultative processes is a key area of our work and engaging others in making submissions and translating what national, regional and local policies mean for communities is an important aspect of the policy focus.

1. Build relationships with policy makers

We build relationships with the policy makers through meetings with planners, Department officials and Ministers and through representation on many forums and boards.

2. Representation

TEF staff, Board and members are represented on many key policy making bodies such as locally through the Public Participation Networks on the Strategic Policy Committees in the County and City. There is representation on many other local collaborative groups that focus on policy such as the Transport and Mobility Forum and the Cork Food Policy Council.

TEF has representation on the statutory national stakeholder National Water Forum and is represented on the Boards of the Community Resource Network of Ireland and Global Action Plan International.

TEF is one of the initial members of the Sustainable Water Network, a national network of leading eNGOs and organisations working to improve water quality. TEF represented SWAN and presented at the Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity Loss in 2022. TEF helps to coordinate the Coastwatch Annual Survey and supports other initiatives by Coastwatch such as delivering training, the Seagrass Campaign and World Wetlands Day.

3. Respond to new policies

TEF contributes to and influences local, regional, national and EU environment and sustainability policies e.g. Local Development Plans, National Waste Management Policy, Circular Economy Policy & Practice, Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy. We collaborate with National eNGOs we are members of to input collective submissions on national strategies such as the River Basin Management Plan, Marine Spatial Plan, National Biodiversity Plan and others.

4. Supporting the public and our members

We support our members and others to build capacity to also submit to consultative processes. We give support to report and act on environmentally damaging activities and keep abreast of legislative changes through attendance at conferences such as the

excellent Annual UCC Law and Environment Conference.

Goal 4

Maintain our cross-sectoral (public, private, NGO and community) collaborations that help us act and deliver a better environment for all.

1. Collaborate with strategic partners

These include long term partners such as Cork City and Cork County Councils, also academic institutions such as UCC and MTU, relevant government departments and other organisations and networks. Currently TEF is involved with research and development; piloting and evaluating; discussion and dissemination of projects such as the Social Cycle and the Health Impact Assessment. The application on CCAP Strand 2 if successful will involve partners GAP Ireland, NUIG, DCU, Cluid Housing and participants of the on the Community Climate Action Programme.

2. Collaborate with Partners on a number of specific initiatives

2.1 As an example, participation with local business, Dept, local authority, to develop the ReStyle Ireland project and others.

2.2 Support the communities we work with under our Project activities to develop and implement actions and projects locally.

2.3 Learn from and share best national and international practice through membership of networks such as GAP International, Coastwatch.

Goal 5

To instigate and/or support relevant projects that deliver solutions to environmental and cross-cutting challenges e.g. Transport and Mobility Forum, ReStyle Ireland

TEF is pivotal in Cork region and in the wider national and international environmental movement to support the delivery of Agenda 2030 given its 30+ years of work and relationship building with agencies, organisations, individuals and communities.

TEF is uniquely positioned to engage with people and communities and strengthen local action to realise policies and strategies of the local authorities, other agencies, national Department and the EU. TEF can play a significant role in generating innovative ideas, piloting new initiatives and helping to roll-out national and international environmental policies, programmes and projects.

1. Identify innovative projects and source funding to develop pilot projects

2.4 Research, develop and pilot projects that deliver better outcomes for people, communities, climate change and biodiversity.

- 2.5 Run pilot projects and, where evidence supports, advocate for national mainstreaming, e.g. *Boomerang Enterprises, Transport & Mobility Forum, Cork Urban Soil Project, Cork City Community Climate Action Programme (CCAP)*.
- 2.6 Disseminate findings of pilot projects through case studies, newsletter, conferences etc.

Goal 6

To develop the capacity of the organization

TEF is a well governed and well-run charity operating as a Company Limited by Guarantee. As an organisation TEF is continuously examining ways in which it can grow and develop. As a membership organisation and a charity it is critical that TEF models itself on best practice in terms of its governance and organisational efficiency. The following steps will be taken during this strategic plan in order to enhance TEF's governance, organisational capacity and partnership relationships.

1. Improve TEF Governance

- 1.1 Review Board membership, sub-groups and put succession plan in place.
- 1.2 Review membership and ways to better engage and support members.
- 1.3 Implement all processes and procedures necessary to fully comply with the Charities Governance Code.
- 1.4 Ensure statutory compliance e.g. Charity Regulator, Lobbying Act, Data Commissioner, CRO.
- 1.5 Carry out an annual review of the Strategic Plan.

2. Develop TEF Organisational Capacity

- 2.1 Review the functional requirements of the organisation.
- 2.2 Identify any skill set deficit from this review.
- 2.3 Implement a plan to address any deficits identified.

3. Broaden TEF Funding Base

- 3.1 Secure multi annual funding in line with our Strategic Plan.
- 3.2 Identify additional sources of funding and submit proposals accordingly e.g. EMBRACER, IEN Thematic Funds, Strand 2 of the Community Climate Action Programme, Creative Ireland
- 3.3 Identify EU and national Climate Action and Biodiversity funding opportunities.

Appendix A
The Environmental Forum Board Members 2025/ 2026



Isabelle Sutton

Chairperson

Flower Farmer



Caitríona Courtney

Treasurer

SE Systems (*resigned 2025*)



Ellie Donovan

Secretary

Freelance Gardener & Project Manager



Juan Camarasa

Director

Consultant (*resigned 2025*)



Louise Harrington

Director

Cork Traveller
Women's Network (*resigned 2025*)



Dylan Krug

Director

UCC School of Law/ MaREI Researcher



Dave Ludgate

Director

Engineer/ AECOM



Dúigí Mercer

Director

Mature Student UCC

Ger O'Halloran

Director

Retired from Private Sector

Forum Personnel

Bernadette Connolly

Coordinator

Darren McAdam O'Connell

TMF Coordinator

Aline Ribeiro Rodrigues

Finance and Administrative Officer

Theo Dillon

Projects Development Officer

Faye Fitzpatrick

Projects Events

Appendix B

Representation

Irish Environmental Network	Member
Environmental Pillar	Member
Sustainable Water Network	Member
Coastwatch	Regional Coordinator
National Water Forum (ceased Feb 2024)	
Community Resources Network of Ireland	Board Member
Irish Ocean Literacy Network	Member
Global Action Plan International	Member
Coalition 2030	Member and Steering Committee
Pesticide Action Network	Member

Cork City PPN

Bernie Connolly	LCDC
Darren McAdam O'Connell	Secretariat
Dylan Krug	International Relations & Tourism SPC

Cork County PPN

Bernie Connolly	West Cork LCDC/ LAG
Darren McAdam O'Connell	Roads and Transport SPC

Collaborative Projects & Bodies CEF is represented on

Transport and Mobility Forum (coordination and management by TEF)
Nature Forum (set up in 2022 instigated by UCC Green Campus & TEF)
Cork Urban Soil Project (project manager & gardener/ composter employed by TEF)
Growing Lifelong Learning in Cork
Food Policy Council
Cork Sky Friendly Campaign Cork
Climate Action
EcCoWell
Cork City Freshwater Monitoring Network

Position Paper 1 – Sustainability Principles

At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, held in June 1992 and otherwise known as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, a global action plan for sustainable development called **Agenda 21** was agreed and signed. **Agenda 21** committed its signatories to defining how they intended to achieve sustainable development in their respective countries. Sustainable development has been defined in many different ways, perhaps the best known being *“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”* (The Brundtland Commission 1987).

Ireland’s **Agenda 21** document, *“Sustainable Development – a Strategy for Ireland”* was published in 1997. Each local authority is also committed to the preparation of a **Local Agenda 21 Plan** document, which outlines how sustainable development would be achieved at local level.

Cork County Council’s draft **Local Agenda 21 Plan** prepared in late 1997 has yet to be finalised and adopted. It outlined how Cork County Council is already involved in a number of projects in the field of sustainable development in County Cork, but the **County Development Plan** currently under review offers the best opportunity yet to ensure that sustainable development is delivered through the planning system.

To do so, it is essential that the **County Development Plan** states clearly **the thirteen criteria of Sustainable Development** (with reference to Local Agenda 21):

- **Resources** are used efficiently and waste is minimised by closing cycles;
- **Pollution** is limited to levels which natural systems can process without damage;
- **Natural Diversity** is valued and protected;
- **Local needs** are met locally where possible;
- **Good food, water, shelter, and fuel** are available to all at reasonable cost;
- **Satisfying work** in a diverse economy is available to all;
- **Good health** of the community is protected;
- **Environment** is not damaged by access to facilities, services, goods and other people;
- **Personal safety** of the community is secured from crime and violence;
- **Skills, knowledge and information** are accessible to all;

- **Participation in decision making** is extended to the whole community;
- **Culture, leisure and recreation** opportunities are readily available to all;
- **Local distinctiveness and character** are valued and protected.

PP1/06/01