



TOURISM NORTHERN IRELAND

Sustainable Business Pathway Programme

Ards and North Down Borough Council, in partnership with Tourism Northern Ireland, invites expressions of interest from tourism businesses based within the borough to participate in an innovative business sustainability programme. Through completion you will have the opportunity to achieve a Level 4 Certificate in Sustainable Tourism Practice in Destinations, accredited by Ulster University.

Facilitated by The Tourism Space, this programme aims to inspire collective sustainable action across Ards and North Down and help businesses achieve cost savings.

Expressions of interest must be received by 12noon on Wednesday 6 November 2024

Programme Overview:

The Sustainable Business Pathway Programme offers structured mentoring and training, enabling businesses across Ards and North Down to develop sustainable tourism offerings, reduce waste, water, and energy consumption, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability. The blend of in-person and online modules fosters interaction, creating a platform for sharing information, experience, and expertise within the tourism sector.

This cohort of the programme follows on from two delivered by Tourism NI. Feedback from cohort one seeing 100% of participants recommending the programme and 100% of participants saying they were satisfied or very satisfied with the programme schedule.

“The programme has provided us with an excellent opportunity to engage with like-minded businesses within Northern Ireland, learn from accredited subject experts, benchmark against global examples and greatly enhance our confidence in what we have already achieved, our sustainability standards and identify key actions going forward”, Martin McMullan, Life Adventure/Bike Mourne and Cohort 1 Participant

This programme is designed to build strong relationships, enhance knowledge, and establish best practices among participants, ultimately leading to a thriving cluster of sustainable tourism businesses who can confidently respond to evolving visitor expectations. By participating, you will gain the tools and knowledge needed to pursue third-party sustainability accreditation.

A full list of programme dates and modules can be found in Appendix 1. Please note that this is a draft schedule.

*Please note: Attendance at all sessions is mandatory and will be a key criterion in the shortlisting process.

Eligibility:

This programme is most suitable for business owners or senior decision-makers with fixed premises or assets that can be assessed for sustainability improvements. There is no requirement to have any previous sustainability knowledge or certification as the modules are designed to support businesses at all stages of their sustainability journey. We welcome expressions of interest from various tourism businesses; however, the following **are not eligible** to apply:

- Tourism Clusters/Networks
- Tour guides
- Business start-ups (businesses less than 12 months old)
- Businesses primarily focused on craft, food, or retail without a participatory visitor experience

Participation Details:

Participation in the core programme is fully funded by Tourism NI and ANDBC, representing an in-kind investment of over £2,000 by Tourism NI and ANDBC in your business. Upon completing the programme, you will receive a certificate and join a network of businesses committed to enhancing Northern Ireland's sustainability.

While the core programme is fully funded, participants are expected to achieve the Level 4 Certificate in Sustainable Tourism Practice in Destinations through Ulster University. **The cost for this certification is £200 and does not require additional work to what is included in the core programme. The cost for this certification is £400 with each business paying £200 and the additional £200 covered by funders.**

A Level 4 qualification covers qualifications like HNC's and Higher Apprenticeships and represents specialist learning in a particular work area. For more information on qualification levels please visit: [Qualifications: what the different levels mean | nidirect](#)

Programme Benefits:

By completing the programme, you will have gained the appropriate skills to:

- Measure your carbon footprint and set meaningful improvement targets
- Develop a Sustainability Action Plan that includes climate action, biodiversity, accessibility, outdoor ethics, and marketing
- Lead in sustainable experience development, setting an example for others
- Learn how to collaborate and share your collective destination story
- Understand the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030, and take action towards these goals
- Showcase sustainable practices and experiences across ANDBC
- Join a growing cohort of sustainable tourism professionals, committed to climate change through tourism practices

Additional Support:

- Guidance on completing a carbon calculator for your business
- One-to-one mentoring
- Access to a dedicated online learning hub
- Access to enhanced learning opportunities as part of the cohort
- National and Local PR opportunities through programme promotion

How to apply:

To apply to the Sustainable Business Pathway Programme, please complete the short expression of interest below. The expression of interest is designed to identify your current level of sustainable knowledge and identify your ambitions for participation. Expressions of interest close at **12pm on Wednesday 6 November 2024.**

Please note that spaces are limited. Active participation in the full programme is required. In the event of oversubscription, selection will be based on:

- Quality of response to Question 17
- Businesses with fixed assets that can be assessed and measured against sustainability targets
- Ensuring a complementary mix of businesses by sector and size
- Priority consideration for participants in the Embrace a Giant Spirit Experience Portfolio (for visitor attractions and experiences)

The running of this programme is subject to satisfactory levels of applications being received.