

What is a Sustainability Policy

One of the first steps towards 'sustainability', is to develop an effective Sustainability Policy or a documented commitment to addressing sustainability in a business. A Sustainability Policy is a 'Statement of Intent' that can be used to communicate to staff and customers a commitment to improving environmental and social sustainability over time.

A formally documented Sustainability Policy expresses your sustainability aims, and can consist of three parts:

1. An official and public statement of your company's commitment to achieve sustainability objectives and protect the environment
2. Clear specification of delegated responsibilities, monitoring and reporting procedures
3. A plan to guide your sustainability practices and provide continuity. The plan should include setting cost reduction targets, timetables and budgetary limits to achieve these aims, allocation of appropriate resources and annual review procedures.

Experience from tourism operators shows that the most effective approach to having a commitment to sustainability is to have a policy expressed in a formal, written declaration of commitment. It should be accompanied by a set of stated objectives, an action plan for achieving them and a clear specification of delegated responsibilities. A Sustainability Policy establishes an overall sense of direction. It sets goals regarding the level of responsibility and performance required of the company, against which all subsequent actions will be judged.

Benefits of a Sustainability Policy

- As soon as your policy statement has been written, it is imperative that it be formally adopted and ratified within your business. In this way a number of key benefits can be achieved:
- Gaining senior management support through formal process can ensure the appropriate time and resources are allocated to succeed;
- Ensuring that everyone has a share in the policy helps to build good relations across teams/departments within the company who can influence the implementation;
- Encouraging participation and cooperation by staff and management by having a formal Policy should not be underestimated. Many barriers to change in environmental sustainability are people issues rather than technical ones;
- Ongoing motivation and education are keys to the success of your environmental sustainability program that can be reinforced through a Sustainability Policy;
- A formal policy can help to dispel misconceptions that environment sustainability measures result in loss of amenity to customers and
- A policy should stipulate how you intend keeping staff involved in environmental sustainability activities and raising individual awareness of environmental issues. This will result in a boost to staff morale and pride as people are made to feel part of a solution.

Writing a Sustainability Policy

Before writing a sustainability policy, take the time to consider responses to the following questions. Your answers will feed directly into the Sustainability Policy template provided over the page.

1. What is the name of the community your business is located in?

2. What is the name of your business (and the name of your parent company if relevant)

3. What type of business are you in?

4. Why is sustainability important to your local environment?

5. What steps are you already taking to address sustainability and what do you have planned?

6. In your own words, what would you like to have achieved 12 months from now?

7. Who is the main point of contact in your business who is driving this?

8. How will you communicate this to staff and get them involved?

Sample Sustainability Policy

(INSERT NAME) SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Following consideration of the importance of environmental sustainability and a commitment to be a benefit to the (Q1-INSERT LOCAL COMMUNITY NAME) community, (Q2-INSERT ORGANISATION NAME) is committed to strive to achieve environmental and social sustainability for (Q3-BRIEFLY DESCRIBE SCOPE OF TOURISM PRODUCT).

(Q4-INSERT PARAGRAPH DESCRIBING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE, IF ANY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT NEARBY)

Example: Mahi Mahi Hotel is the resort town of Castilada, with the ski field on the alpine mountain of Castille. The local Lake has regional significance as a pristine alpine lake.

(Q2-INSERT ORGANISATION NAME) commits to continually improve the environmental and social sustainability performance.

(Q5-INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL APPROACH)

Example: Mahi Mahi Hotel (a large organisation with an Environmental Management System) will implement and regularly update its Environmental Management System. OR Castilada Cableways (a small aerial cableway organisation) will implement our environmental action plan in accordance with the requirements of the Green Globe Company Standard).

(Q2-INSERT ORGANISATION NAME) will comply with all relevant legislation and regulations, we strive to achieve international best practice in (NOMINATE AN AREA FOR FOCUS).

We have appointed the (Q7-INSERT NAME OF CONTACT) as the Sustainability Coordinator, who has responsibility for ensuring ongoing environmental performance, identification of environmental risks, recording and monitoring of impacts and implementing environmental and social sustainability measures.

Special consideration will be given to employing and empowering the local staff and wherever efficient and environmentally sustainable, products and services will be sourced locally.

We encourage staff to present our commitment to environmental and social sustainability and our status under the Green Globe programme to our guests, suppliers, contractors, agents and wholesalers. (Q8-INSERT HOW YOU WILL INVOLVE STAFF).

SIGNED
(NAME, POSITION eg. Chairman of Directors, CEO)
(INSERT DATE)

NOTE: This policy is a public document to be on display, a copy may be given to anyone. The organisation invites staff, landowners, guests and the community to suggest ways to further achieve best practice environmental and social sustainability. This policy will be reviewed by the end of 2008 and subsequently each year.