**Environmental and Sustainability Policy**

**General Comments -**

* This is a template/precedent document only. It should be tailored as appropriate to suit the needs of each individual firm.
* All sections should be considered and implemented as deemed appropriate for the firm. This cover page should not be included.
* The LQSI cannot accept any responsibility for any errors or omissions contained in this template document.
* The document should be reviewed on an annual basis, or as required.

**Specific Comments -**

* In 2022 this policy has been updated to include a new section on ‘remote working’ and reference to CPD requirements.
* This policy has been updated to reference the ongoing rising energy costs and we would encourage firms to maintain an Energy Usage and Sustainability Report. A sample report has been drafted and is set out in Appendix A. This is a requirement for firms who have signed up to the LQSI Green Charter.

**The Legal Quality Standard of Ireland**

**Updated February 2023**

**[FIRM NAME]**

**Environmental and Sustainability Policy**

[Firm name] recognises that it has a responsibility to the environment beyond legal and regulatory requirements. We at [firm name] are committed to reducing our environmental impact and strive to continually improve our environmental performance as an integral part of our business strategy and operating methods, with regular review points. We will encourage clients, suppliers and other stakeholders to do the same.

In addition to improving our environmental performance we are aware of the rising energy costs and office costs generally and by endeavouring to comply with this policy we will also reduce our energy use and resulting energy costs by being mindful how we use energy daily.

[Name] is responsible for ensuring that the environmental and sustainability policy is implemented and that the firm completes an annual energy report. However, all employees, whether working onsite or offsite i.e. remotely, have a responsibility in their areas to ensure that the aims and objectives of this policy are met.

The firm will aim to meet the six requirements of the LQSI Environmental Standard, as follows–

1. Reducing the use of paper
2. Proper disposal of waste
3. Discontinuing the use of single use plastics
4. Using more energy efficient resources in the office
5. Travelling to and from work and work events in a more environmentally friendly manner
6. Reviewing our overall practices to ensure that the firm is as environmentally sustainable as possible

We endeavour to: -

* Comply with environmental legislation and other requirements by implementing best practise procedures where possible.
* Continually improve and monitor environmental performance.
* Continually improve and reduce environmental impacts.
* Incorporate environmental impacts into business decisions.
* Increase employee awareness and training.

**Paper**

* We will minimise the use of paper in the office.
* We will continue to ensure that the office is paper light.
* We will only print emails where necessary.
* We will encourage email recipients to only print our emails where necessary.
* We will photocopy double sided wherever possible.
* We will reduce packaging as much as possible.
* We will use shredding and recycling units, by shredding and recycling paper documents that are no longer required, to protect both the environment and client confidentiality.

**Energy and water**

* We will seek to reduce the amount of energy used as much as possible.
* Lights and electrical equipment will be switched off when not in use.
* Heating will be adjusted with energy consumption in mind.
* The energy consumption and efficiency of new products will be taken into account when purchasing.
* We will monitor usage of energy within the office, by completing an annual energy report, see Appendix A.
* We will encourage environmentally friendly practises and energy efficiency e.g. by fitting aerators to taps to reduce water consumption.

**Office supplies**

* We will evaluate if the need can be met in another way.
* We will evaluate if leasing is an option before purchasing equipment.
* We will evaluate the environmental impact of any new products we intend to purchase.
* We will favour more environmentally friendly and efficient products wherever possible.
* We will reduce, reuse and recycle materials wherever possible.

**Transportation**

* We will encourage all staff to use the most environmentally friendly means of transport.
* We will promote the use of travel alternatives such as e-mail or video/phone conferencing.
* We will make additional efforts to accommodate the needs of those using public transport or bicycles.
* We will favour ‘green’ vehicles and maintain them rigorously to ensure ongoing efficiency.

**Maintenance and cleaning**

* Cleaning materials used will be as environmentally friendly as possible.
* Materials used in office refurbishment will be as environmentally friendly as possible.
* We will only use licensed and appropriate organisations to dispose of waste

**Monitoring and improvement.**

* We will strive to comply with and exceed all relevant regulatory requirements.
* We will monitor our progress to ensure ongoing improvements in our environmental performance.
* We will strive to continually improve and reduce environmental impacts.
* We will strive to incorporate environmental factors into business decisions.
* We will increase employee awareness through training.
* We will review this policy and any related business issues at our monthly management meetings.
* We have introduced a formal template report for recording our annual energy usage and it outlines our firm’s environmental sustainability initiatives, see Appendix A, this will be updated at regular intervals and completed annually.

**Culture**

* We will strive towards continual improvement with regard to environmental issues.
* We will involve staff in the implementation of this policy, for greater commitment and improved performance.
* We will update this policy annually in consultation with staff and other stakeholders where necessary.
* We will train, educate and inform our employees about environmental issues that may affect their work.
* We will work with suppliers, contractors and sub-contractors to improve their environmental performance
* We will use local labour and materials where available to reduce co2 and help the community.
* We will promote environmental awareness among our employees and encourage them to work in an environmentally responsible manner.
* Fee earners should be encouraged to complete the maximum number of CPD hours through e-learning, as permitted in the current CPD cycle.

**Remote Working**

Employees who are remote working must aim to meet, as far as is practicable, the aforementioned six requirements of the LQSI Environmental Standard.

There are many environmental benefits as a result of remote working, which include:-

* Reduction in the number of cars on the road, thereby reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions, fossil fuel consumption, and energy usage.
* Reduction of environmental and human health impacts as a result of decreased air pollution.
* Reduction in paper usage due to the increased use of digitized documents.
* Reduction in carbon footprint through eco-friendly diets with more time to choose healthier foods and prepare meals at home.
* Reduction in plastic usage due to less take away cups, bottles of water and general disposable materials

**Signed:**

**Dated:**

**Date of next review:**

**APPENDIX A**

(*This is a sample template - each firm will need to tailor same to suit their firm, e.g. you may wish to use it to record energy consumption annually/bi-annually/quarterly as set out below)*

**REPORT ON ENERGY USAGE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**[NAME OF FIRM]**

* **Overview of Energy Usage General**
* (SAMPLE -- There has been a reduction in energy consumption in all buildings, with a 12% reduction recorded in the Dublin office for 2023 and a 20% reduction recorded in the Cork office for 2023.)
* **E.G. Dublin Office**
* (SAMPLE SUMMARY -- The Dublin office of [Name of Firm] has an area of 600 square meters. Energy consumption for this office is solely electricity, which is used for heating, lighting and equipment usage/electricity for lighting and equipment and natural gas for heating. The energy rating for this building is C1/this is a protected building and is therefore exempt from the energy rating system.)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2023 | Energy Consumption | Quarter Cost  (€) | Quarter Use  (kWh) |
| Quarter 1 | * Electricity * Gas |  |  |
| Quarter 2 | * Electricity * Gas |  |  |
| Quarter 3 | * Electricity * Gas |  |  |
| Quarter 4 | * Electricity * Gas |  |  |

* **Specify Energy Consumption in any other offices (E.G. Cork Office** -- DELETE SECTION IF ONLY ONE OFFICE)
* (SAMPLE SUMMARY -- The Cork office of [Name of Firm] has an area of 450 square meters. Energy consumption for this office is solely electricity, which is used for heating, lighting and equipment usage/ electricity for lighting and equipment and natural gas for heating. The energy rating for this building is B1/is a protected building and is therefore exempt from the energy rating system.)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2023 | Energy Consumption | Quarter Cost  (€) | Quarter Use  (kWh) |
| Quarter 1 | * Electricity * Gas |  |  |
| Quarter 2 | * Electricity * Gas |  |  |
| Quarter 3 | * Electricity * Gas |  |  |
| Quarter 4 | * Electricity * Gas |  |  |

* **Outline the firm’s environmental sustainability initiatives** *(The following are examples only – please amend to reflect your firm’s actual initiatives)*
* Purchase of single use plastics ceased since March 2021.
* Use a default printer setting to print documents double-sided.
* Review of heating system in Dublin office.
* Heating controls to set the times that heating comes on and off to fit in with the daily business hours.
* Heating is switched off 30 minutes before the firm intends to stop using it.
* The thermostat is turned down to 19 degrees celicius in offices where safe and possible to do so. The temperature in hallways is lower at (ideally between 15 – 18 degrees celcius.
* Ongoing replacement of fluorescent lighting with LED lighting.
* Sensor lighting in use.
* Introduced compost bin service for Dublin and Cork Offices.
* Provision of General Waste and Recycling bins at stations throughout the offices. Shredded paper is recycled.
* Switched electricity and/or gas contract in April 2022, this will be reviewed again in 12 months.
* Reviewed environmental business grants available e.g. see SEAI website.
* **Sustainable Procurement**
* Any catering contracts now stipulate the exclusion of single-use plastics.