**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 -**

* All updates are redlined.
* This policy has been updated to include a new section on ‘Waste Management’ to ensure firms meet commercial recycling regulations.

**The Legal Quality Standard of Ireland**

**Updated March 2025**

**[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.

*[Nam*e] is responsible for ensuring that the environmental and sustainability policy is implemented and that the firm completes annual energy and sustainability reports. 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 or B.
* 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 reports for recording our annual energy usage and they outline our firm’s environmental sustainability initiatives, see Appendix A/B and C. These 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.

**Waste Management**

* We aim to fulfil our legal recycling obligations by properly segregating waste through the national three-bin system and adopting sustainable waste management practices.
* We have introduced bins for residual waste, mixed dry recyclables and bio waste to ensure the proper segregation of packaging waste by material type.
* We aim to achieve sustainable waste management by:-
  + reducing the amount of waste generated in the first place
  + reusing where possible
  + recycling what cannot be reused
  + selling what we can
  + only then, disposing of what is left

**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**

**[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 |  |  |

**APPENDIX B**

Alternatively, the firm can complete the below Energy Acton Plan (EAP) which is a strategic document that lays out goals and possible actions to reduce energy consumption by increasing energy efficiency and procuring more renewable energy.

For useful information on this, see

<https://www.seai.ie/publications/Energy-Management-Guide-for-SMEs.pdf>

and for a useful workbook, see

<https://www.seai.ie/publications/Energy-Management-Workbook-SMEs.pdf>

and to view a sample of a completed workbook, see

<https://www.seai.ie/publications/Energy-Management-Workbook-Example-SMEs.pdf>

**APPENDIX C**

**REPORT ON SUSTAINABILITY**

**Outline the firm’s environmental sustainability initiatives.**

*(The following are examples only – please amend to reflect your firm’s documented initiatives)*

* Re/location of office premises – describe in detail any green clauses built into commercial lease.
* When procuring office supplies, materials, food and promotional items, firm to outline emphasis on sustainability, recyclability and sourcing products locally. Environmental due diligence embedded in supplier on-boarding processes as follows [ ]
* The firm has appointed [insert name] as an environmental champion/green committee (depending on the size of the firm) to oversee the firm’s environmental and sustainability projects and goals.
* Outline any sponsorship or supports offered by the firm for green and/or local initiatives.
* Set out firm policy in relation to printing and general paper usage. E.g use of a default printer setting to print documents double-sided.
* Review of heating system in [insert location] 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 Celsius in offices where safe and possible to do so. The temperature in hallways is lower at (ideally between 15 – 18 degrees Celsius.
* Ongoing replacement of fluorescent lighting with LED lighting.
* Sensor lighting in use.
* Outline waste management plan e.g. introduction of compost bin service for [insert location] and [insert location] offices.
* Provision of General Waste and Recycling bins at stations throughout the offices. Shredded paper is recycled.
* Switched electricity and/or gas contract in [insert date], this will be reviewed again in 12 months.
* Reviewed environmental business grants available e.g. see SEAI website.