

SUSTAINABILITY POLICY WORKBOOK 2.0

A GUIDE FOR THE UK
WEDDING INDUSTRY



SUSTAINABLE
WEDDING ALLIANCE

Introduction: Why do you need a Sustainability Policy?

A sustainability policy is a non-negotiable asset for any modern business. It is a living, working document that goes beyond environmental considerations to define your business's entire integrity.

This workbook is designed to support every UK wedding business:

- If you are new to sustainability: Use this workbook to create your foundational policy, starting with 3-5 manageable actions (your "low-hanging fruit").
- If you are reviewing or updating an existing policy: Use the Four Pillars and the Operational Deep Dive section to expand your commitments and set more ambitious, measurable targets.

This workbook is structured around the modern concept of the Triple Bottom Line (People, Planet, and Profit), expanded to include Purpose. By detailing your commitment across all pillars, you create a policy that is robust, transparent, and acts as a powerful tool to building trust with conscious couples.

Section 1: Defining your Foundation and Objectives

1.1 The 4 Pillars of a Sustainable Wedding Business

The first crucial step in developing an effective policy is assessing your business holistically. Modern sustainability goes beyond simple recycling; it requires balancing all aspects of your operation to achieve true integrity. By focusing on these four interconnected pillars: Planet, People, Profit, and Purpose, you ensure your policy is comprehensive, ethically sound, and resilient. This approach protects you against accusations of "greenwashing" and aligns your values with the conscious couples you aim to attract.

Your policy should cover these four interconnected areas:

Pillar	Focus	What It Covers
Planet (Environmental)	Minimising your negative environmental impact.	Waste management, carbon reduction, energy, water, pollution, and biodiversity.
People (Social & Ethical)	Upholding ethical labour standards, human rights, equality, diversity, inclusion and community impact.	Team welfare, fair wages, ethical sourcing, community volunteering, and charitable efforts.
Profit (Economic)	Ensuring long-term financial viability and responsible economic practices for your business.	Fair pricing for clients, prompt payment to suppliers, financial transparency, and reinvestment in sustainable infrastructure.
Purpose (Mission & Legacy)	Defining your core reason for being beyond profit and embedding ethical values into your long-term vision.	Mission alignment, ethical governance, industry advocacy, and measuring success by impact, not just revenue.

1.2 Drafting your Policy Opening Statement

Before defining your specific objectives, you must establish your business's overall commitment. This opening statement should be aspirational, align with your values, and clearly reference your approach to the four pillars. This statement will often be the first thing clients see.

An example statement would be:

"[Your Business Name] is committed to continuous improvement in sustainability, recognising the growing need for responsible business practice in the UK wedding industry. Our policy outlines our intention to learn, adapt, and integrate ethical practices across our operations. Our commitment is holistic, balancing the essential four pillars of sustainability: Planet, by actively working to reduce our environmental footprint; People, by fostering ethical standards and team welfare; Profit, by ensuring economic responsibility and transparency; and Purpose, by aligning our core mission with a positive long-term impact."

1.3 Defining Sustainable Objectives and Leadership

Your sustainability objectives are the specific, measurable targets that translate your policy into practical action. If you have not yet defined these, stop and make this your priority. These objectives must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) and will be the targets you track, measure, and report on later in this workbook.

Define the "who" and "what" of your policy.

Who is the dedicated Sustainability Leader/Champion?

A specific person responsible for driving and reporting progress.

Who does this Policy apply to?

e.g., employees, sub-contractors, temporary staff, preferred suppliers, partners.

What are your core sustainable objectives?

Aim to be ambitious and cover all areas of your business, from energy to team culture. These should be specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic and time bound.

Examples:

1. Carbon/Emissions (Overall Ambition): Achieve Net Zero for all Scope 1 & 2 operational emissions by [Year].
2. Resources (Energy/Water): Switch 100% of premises electricity to certified renewable sources and reduce water consumption by 20% per event.
3. Waste/Circularity: Divert 95% of all event and office waste from landfill via advanced reuse, recycling, and composting programs.
4. Transport: Transition 50% of company vehicles to electric or low-emission alternatives by [Year].
5. Supply Chain: Ensure 80% of core suppliers are locally sourced (UK-based) and ethically verified (e.g., Fairtrade, B Corp, or SWA accredited).
6. Team/Culture: Commit 100% of permanent staff to complete mandatory annual sustainability and ethical sourcing training.

Section 2: Policy Requirements & Commitment (The "What")

These are the non-negotiable statements that define your commitment. We have included a selection of ideas for you to consider using. Please note these will be the core of your policy document and should reflect your purpose and values as a business.

In the examples below you could replace 'We' with your company name if preferred.

2.1 Planet (Environmental Responsibility)

We are committed to:

1. Carbon Emission Reduction: Measuring our direct and indirect carbon emissions and setting clear targets to achieve significant carbon reduction within an ambitious timeframe.
2. Circular Economy: Prioritising reuse, rental, repair, and recycling to eliminate single-use items in all our operations and client-facing deliverables.
3. Waste Management: Implementing robust systems to separate, reduce, and, where possible, compost all organic and recyclable waste, with a specific focus on eliminating single-use plastics.
4. Responsible Sourcing: Ensuring that all materials (e.g., paper, flowers, décor) are seasonally and locally sourced wherever possible, and that global materials are sustainably certified (e.g., FSC certified paper).

2.2 People (Social and Ethical Responsibility)

We are committed to:

1. Ethical Labour: Upholding fair wages, safe working conditions, and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across our business operations and recruitment.
2. Community Impact: Actively supporting local communities and relevant charities through volunteering, in-kind donations, or dedicated philanthropic efforts.
3. Transparency: Communicating our sustainability performance, challenges, and successes openly with our clients, suppliers, and the wider public.
4. Client Education: Guiding and inspiring our clients to make sustainable and ethical choices, offering clear, low-impact alternatives for all services.

2.3 Profit (Economic Responsibility)

We are committed to:

1. Fair Trade: Charging clients a fair price that accurately reflects the value and sustainable cost of goods and labour.
2. Prompt Payment: Ensuring all suppliers are paid promptly and fairly, respecting the terms of their contracts.
3. Sustainable Investment: Reinvesting a percentage of profits into sustainable infrastructure (e.g., renewable energy, electric vehicles) or ethical business operations.

2.4 Purpose (Mission & Legacy) Requirements

We are committed to:

1. Mission Alignment: Ensuring all major business decisions are reviewed against our core sustainability purpose and long-term ethical vision.
2. Thought Leadership: Sharing our journey, knowledge, and best practices to inspire and educate other wedding professionals and couples.
3. Continuous Improvement: Maintaining this policy as a living document, reviewed and improved annually, ensuring we adapt to new industry best practices and scientific understanding.

Section 3: Defining and Communicating your Action Plan

This section moves from commitment to action. It defines your specific, measurable targets (Objectives) and the engaging steps (Actions) that will be taken to meet the requirements in Section 2.

3.1 Your Core SMART Objectives

Your sustainable objectives should be the specific, measurable targets that translate your policy into practical action. Take the objectives developed above, and defined them further. They must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) and will be the targets you track, measure, and report on. Examples below.

Objective	Target Date	Link to Pillar
Example 1: Achieve Net Zero for scope 1 and 2 emissions (energy and direct transport) by purchasing certified offsets for any remaining output.	31/12/2030	Planet, Profit
Example 2: Ensure 100% of fresh produce used in catering is sourced from suppliers within a 50-mile radius of the venue.	Ongoing, effective 01/01/2026	Planet, Profit
Example 3: Implement an annual team training program focused on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in client service and recruitment.	31/03/2025	People, Purpose

3.2 From Target to Task: Your Engaging Action Plan

This is the section your clients, team, and suppliers will read. Use this to describe the tasks your business will perform to achieve your objectives. Frame these actions as positive changes and innovations, this makes the policy interesting and demonstrates integrity.

Example:

Summary: The following steps are our ongoing commitments. We believe these tangible tasks are the most effective way to deliver real, measurable change across our business, demonstrating our commitment to sustainability in every detail.

Area of Action	Example Practical Steps (implement the steps relevant to your business role)	Applicable Businesses
Operational Efficiency (Energy, Water, Transport)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Switch: We have switched to a certified 100% renewable energy tariff (UK-based) for our studio/office/venue power needs. 2. Water Guardians: We will install low-flow taps and cisterns in all non-catering areas, aiming for a 20% reduction in water consumption year-on-year. 3. Smart Commuting: We actively promote the use of electric vehicles or public transport for all client meetings and site visits. 	All Suppliers, especially Venues, Studios, Offices
Circularity & Waste	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Zero-Waste Design: We offer couples a mandatory rental-first catalogue of décor and props, eliminating the need for single-use purchases where possible. 2. Food Rescue: For all weddings, we implement strict portion control based on final RSVPs and partner with a local food charity (e.g., OLIO or Too Good To Go) to redistribute surplus food. 3. Paperless Pledge: All client contracts, planning documents, and supplier agreements are digital-first, eliminating paper waste. 	Planners, Florists, Decor Hire, Venues, Caterers
Supply Chain & Sourcing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethical Vetting: We update our supplier vetting process to include a mandatory sustainability policy check and request evidence of third-party certifications (e.g., B Corp, Fairtrade). 2. Local First: We prioritise sourcing ingredients, materials (e.g., dried flowers), and printing from UK-based, seasonal, and low-transport-mileage partners. 	All Suppliers, especially Caterers, Florists, Photographers, Planners

Area of Action	Example Practical Steps (implement the steps relevant to your business role)	Applicable Businesses
Team & Culture	1. Training Investment: We dedicate one paid day per employee per year for sustainability and ethics training, ensuring our team is knowledgeable and empowered. 2. Community Giveback: We commit to dedicating 1% of our annual profit (or 2 pro-bono services) to a charity aligned with our Purpose (e.g., an environmental or social equality cause). 3. Fair Compensation: We commit to paying all staff the UK Real Living Wage or higher, regardless of position.	All Suppliers

3.3 Measuring and Tracking Your Impact

Measurement is fundamental to credibility. You cannot manage what you don't measure. Tracking progress provides the data needed for continuous improvement, ensures you meet your legal and ethical commitments, and is essential for transparently communicating your successes and challenges to clients. This transparency builds trust and provides a significant competitive advantage.

Requirement	Practical Steps/Actionable Milestones (Your Business's Actions)
Measure Your Baseline	Conduct a sustainability audit within the next 3 months covering energy bills, waste volumes, and key supplier transportation methods.
Set Goals	Use the audit results to set 3 measurable KPIs for the next 12 months (e.g., Reduce electricity use by 15% compared to last year; Increase locally sourced ingredients to 75%; Switch 100% of email marketing to a low-carbon platform like EcoSend).
Monitor & Report	Set up a monthly review meeting (internal) and publish an annual Sustainability Impact Report (external) on your website.

Section 4: Implementation, Compliance, and Review

This final section is arguably the most critical. It transforms your policy from a static document into a dynamic, enforced, and transparent part of your business culture. It's the mechanism for accountability, longevity, and credibility, ensuring that your commitments are actively managed, communicated to all stakeholders, and continuously improved year after year.

4.1 Policy Compliance and Communication

This section should include:

- Who is responsible for maintaining and updating the policy (Policy Administrator)? This person will be responsible for reporting progress on the Policy and updating it at least annually.
- Date of policy publication
- Target compliance date: (The date by which you expect to meet all initial requirements, e.g., 6 months from publication. Insert date)
- Date of next review
- Communication Plan:
 - Summarise key commitments on your website's homepage/About page, or even better turn your Sustainability Policy into your Sustainability page.
 - Include the full Policy in your onboarding pack for all new staff and contractors.
 - Share the Policy with all key suppliers, making compliance a condition of partnership.

Non-Compliance Management:

We suggest that non-compliance by internal staff is managed through the formal internal review process. Non-compliance by external suppliers could result in removal from your Preferred Supplier List or contract termination, consider adding this as an element of any partnership agreements you may have.

4.2 Policy Sign-Off and Review

The sign-off formally establishes that your business leadership fully endorses the policy, providing essential internal authority. The mandatory annual review ensures the policy remains a living document, it forces you to assess progress against your objectives, adapt to new legislation, and adjust your goals to reflect continuous improvement. This section acts as a binding commitment to the future of your sustainable journey. The table below is an example of the required sign-off format.

Example:

This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the continuous improvement cycle, or sooner if required by new legislation or major business changes.

Signed:	(Signature of Sustainability Leader/Owner)
Position:	(Owner/Director/Sustainability Leader)
Business Name:	(Your Business Name)
Date:	(Date of Sign-off)
Next Review Date:	(Review Date)

Checklist

Area	Checkpoint	Status
Foundation	Have we named a Sustainability Leader?	
	Have we defined clear, ambitious, and measurable objectives?	
Planet	Are we on a renewable energy tariff?	
	Do we have a system to track and reduce waste (especially food/single-use)?	
People	Have we defined our ethical sourcing standards for suppliers?	
	Do we have an active commitment to local community support/charity?	
Action	Have we scheduled our initial Sustainability Audit?	
	Is the policy summary publicly visible to clients?	
	Have we informed all staff and key suppliers of the policy?	
	Have we set the Next Review Date?	



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