

## WIND ENERGY IRELAND

## Sustainability Strategy 2024











### Introduction

In early 2024 Wind Energy Ireland launches a Sustainability Strategy setting out how we would work together as a staff team to reduce waste, run our events more sustainably, cut our own travel emissions and to build an inclusive and diverse organisation culture.

We also committed, as the trade association leading Ireland's renewable energy industry to work with our members to develop new policies, showcase best practice and celebrate those leaders in our industry who never stop challenging us to do things more sustainably.

In line with a commitment under that strategy we are publishing a report on progress achieved to the end of 2024 against 21 specific actions. Our progress is then given a specific status using the traffic light system with green for actions completed or on track to be so; yellow for actions where progress has been made but where delivery is not quite on track and red for actions where there is a need to urgently focus resources.

As of the end of 2024, 18 actions are classed as green; 3 actions as amber and no actions as red.

Objective	Actions	KPIs	Report on Progress	Lead Team	Status
1.1	Create and advocate for policies promoting renewable energy and a just, sustainable transition to a zero- carbon energy system.	Evidence of contribution to climate action plan targets and influence on the ambition of future CAPs (At least 3 papers, policy briefings inform an emphasis on sustainable wind energy in CAP 2024 & 2025)	<ul> <li>Throughout 2024 we have responded to more than 30 consultations (as of October 2024).</li> <li>We have also published several policy papers in alignment with our overarching strategy goal – a zero-carbon electricity system.</li> <li>The Government published the latest iteration of the Climate Action Plan, CAP 24, in January 2024 for public consultation.</li> <li>WEI engaged with our members to develop a formal consultation response which was submitted to DECC in April.</li> <li>We have also highlighted other policy developments through our engagements and briefings with senior stakeholders on important CAP topics such as grid connection policy, RESS/O-RESS auctions, Hen Harrier threat response plan, ORE future framework, national ports policy, South Coast DMAP, National Planning Framework and a range of other areas.</li> <li>We will continue to seek to influence the ambition of future CAPs in our advocacy.</li> </ul>	Policy & Research	Green

## WIND ENERGY IRELAND

### **Case Study One**

## **Bringing wind** energy to the classroom

Wind Energy Ireland works with schools across the country to deliver lessons in climate change, wind energy and sustainability.



One of our main partners in this is STEAM education Ltd. Together we have delivered 'Climate Action-in-a-Box' lessons to 569 students across Ireland.

We started delivering these in-class lessons with teachers in 2021 and have now supported 24 schools to date, in counties Donegal, Westmeath, Laois, Carlow, Kilkenny, Clare, Kerry and Waterford.

One of these schools in 2024 was St Ernan's National School, Ballintra, in Co Donegal. As part of their lessons about wind energy, the students were also treated to a visit to their local wind farm, Meenadreen.

Thanks to Energia Renewables the young students enjoyed a school trip to the farm to see for themselves wind energy in action.

The visit and lessons were bolstered by a WindEurope initiative Ireland was selected to take part in. One of just three countries in the EU, Ireland (led by Wind Energy Ireland), took part in an education pilot programme in 2024 to get more schoolchildren learning about wind energy. This Donegal school was one of these early examples.

Patricia Gallagher, Principal of St Ernan's, said the 5th and 6th classes had prepared for the visit by learning about wind farms in the classroom.

"The children are used to travelling past wind farms and have shown a lot of interest in finding out more in class but nothing beats seeing a wind turbine up close," she said, "and hearing about what's involved in constructing a wind farm like this and getting all the components to site.

"It's good for them to hear about potential careers and jobs in green energy – especially local jobs."

In addition to the work we do via STEAM Education we also work with Midlands Science to deliver an annual series of wind energy workshops in schools in Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath. Last year we also sponsored reusable turbine making kits for the charity to use throughout the vear.

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Objec	tive Actions	KPIs	Report on Progress
1.2	Build an evidence base to increase the uptake of nature-positive wind energy.	At least 5 members share examples of nature-positive actions taken by 2024. At least 2 research projects and 5 case studies completed and information disseminated (e.g. Nature + Energy Project) by 2024	A template for gathering case studies has been approved and case studies have been received Energia and NTR plc with commitments from others for more. SSER presented their BNG toolkit at WEI's "Demystifying Biodiversity Net Gain" webinar alongs presentations from WSP and EirGrid. The webinar was attended by around 200 WEI members. The Nature+ Energy research project had a full-page feature in the Trade Show magazine and p at the event. WEI circulated the draft Sectoral Biodiversity Action Plan to members for feedbace was presented at WEI's Asset Management Committee. The RE:HARRIER team was present at WEI's research stand at Trade Show and a public webina arranged for January which will be widely promoted. A new environment and sustainability focused session titled "Developing for Nature" has been for the WEI Annual Conference in Jan 25. WEI's submission for the Hen Harrier Threat Response Plan consultation had large focus on opp for wind industry to be conservation tool for hen harrier, going beyond simply mitigation and compensation. A speaker from FEI has been confirmed for WEI's Annual Conference for a presentation on creat 40yrs of hen harrier foraging habitat via wind farmland leases. WEI held a peatland restoration field trip to Mount Lucas, led by Bord na Móna, for members. WEI promoted Hare's Corner Initiative to encourage uptake of further funding support for 2025 interest from several members already. WEI & CTS collaborated with Fothergill Consulting to create Ireland's first Environmental Impac Assessment for renewables conference, being held in March 25, with a focus on stakeholder pa and improvement of current processes.

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#### Lead Team

Policy & Research supported by External Affairs

#### Status

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Objective	Actions	KPIs	Report on Progress
1.3	Provide thought leadership and collaborate with stakeholders to implement circular economy principles in wind energy projects.	<text></text>	<ul> <li>The new Sustainability WG was successfully formed in Q2 under the AMC and has gathered an ergroup of members.</li> <li>The Head of Sustainability (Ireland) from SSER has been appointed as WG chairperson.</li> <li>WEI Council was polled on priorities to assist scoping the circular economy paper and general sustainability priorities.</li> <li>The Sustainability WG produced a high-level paper on circular economy to set out principles on pareas.</li> <li>The Repowering Ireland report was published, followed by the Repowering WG's position paper vout a list of key recommendations to facilitate the efficient repowering and extension of life of exist wind farms in Ireland.</li> <li>WEI's Asset Management Committee hosted presentation from DNV's ReWind on end-of-life soft WEI's Sustainability WG hosted presentation from Paul Leahy UCC on blade repurposing.</li> <li>WEI engaged with RenewableUK, WindEurope's Sustainability WG and IEA Task Force 45 Phase II A speaker from NTR plc has been confirmed for WEI's Annual Conference for a presentation on incorporating sustainability and environmental actions into business planning and general operation.</li> </ul>
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### Lead Team

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Status

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### Case Study Two

## Supporting sustainability through research



In 2024, the Research Team at Wind Energy Ireland advanced the goals of our Sustainability Strategy, working collaboratively with other teams to drive progress toward a zero-carbon electricity system and a greener, more sustainable future.

The Research Team published a series of impactful policy research reports that made the case for accelerating the decarbonisation of Ireland's electricity system. These included:

- Cutting Carbon, Cutting Bills (Baringa): A detailed analysis of how wind farms reduced gas consumption and lowered energy bills in 2023.
- Legal Review of Draft Planning and Development Bill (Arthur Cox): Offering insights to streamline planning for renewable energy projects.
- Electrifying Ireland (Cornwall Insight): Breaking down Irish cost stack for electricity and gas bills.
- Repowering Ireland (MKO): Outlining strategies to maintain global leadership in onshore wind through efficient repowering.

Firm Access Assessment (TNEI): Exploring the impact of Ireland's 2% threshold for firm grid access.

- Analysing the effects of interconnection on Dispatch Down (Baringa): Analysing the role of interconnection in optimising energy usage.
- Incentivising Electrification in Ireland (Cornwall Insight): Highlighting pathways to accelerate Ireland's electrification journey.



**Supporting Quality Green Job Creation** 

The Research Team also supported the development of Ireland's renewable energy workforce through our work on the EU Erasmus+ funded T-shore project, launching the Irish Offshore Wind Energy Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) at the Trade Show.

highlight our commitment to developing a skilled workforce for Ireland's growing offshore wind sector.

efforts These collectively demonstrate the Research Team's commitment to delivering on WEI's Sustainability Strategy, supporting climate action, and driving transformative change in Ireland's renewable energy landscape.

We also hosted a successful event at the European Parliament in Brussels in November, bringing together policymakers, educators and industry to discuss the future of vocational training in offshore wind. These initiatives





Objecti	ve Actions	KPIs	Report on Progress	Lead Team	Status	/
1.4	Be a net zero organisation by 2025	Reduction in carbon emissions across scopes1, 2 and 3 to achieve net zero carbon by 2025	This remains our objective and in 2025 the organisation will be identifying an established, accredited methodology to follow to achieve this goal.	CEO	Green	
1.4	Reduce waste to as close to zero as possible from operations and from WEI organised events by 2030	Collect baseline information for operations and events by end 2024. Establish plans to reduce waste relative to the baseline in 2025. Enact plan 2026- 2030	Collected baseline information for operations at events by completing the Events Sustainability Tracker for each event to measure progress and track initiatives for each WEI event. This will serve as the starting point for assessing our current waste levels and identifying areas for improvement. Once we have established the baseline, we can develop plans to reduce waste relative to this baseline in 2025. External Affairs team to meet and plan coordinated approach to purchase of printed communications material to reduce waste.	Events	Green	
1.4	Develop and implement a sustainable procurement policy for WEI prioritising Irish suppliers committed to sustainability.	Sustainable procurement policy published 2024 and 70% purchasing in line with policy by 2025. (covering areas including training, office supplies, food, travel)	Sustainable Procurement Policy prepared which commits to prioritising environmentally friendly products and services, with a focus on sustainability, energy efficiency, waste reduction, hazardous substances avoidance and renewable resources. Questions added to our Supplier forms now enquire as to whether a company has a Sustainability Policy, the environmental & social impact their products/services have & their priorities and plans for the future. Preference given to ordering from sustainable providers, using Irish suppliers where possible, product lifecycle, reusable/recyclable products. As the above only applies to new suppliers we will roll out the supplier form to existing suppliers as we place orders. Sustainability Procurement Policy.docx Supplier Set Up Form WEI.pdf		Green	



2.1 Support quality green job creation in the renewable energy sector By 2025 we will commence research that will identify the number of jobs in the wind energy sector. By 2025 we will commence research that will identify the number of jobs in the wind energy sector. WEI and GTS published a report in January 2024 called Building our Po- Skills and Talent Needs. This report focused on the skills, resourcing and supply chain requirem term offshore wind targets out to 2040 and beyond. This report was de stakeholders via the Expert Advisory Group on Offshore Wind Skills, inc. This report has been used as the baseline for the development of the o	
showcases the approach to offshore wind development in Ireland and	ements to deliver on Ireland's I
across each lifecycle stage of development.	developed in collaboration m
Both of these pieces of work have provided direction and focus to the	ncluding IDA and Enterprise I
Croup for Offshore Wind Skills and Workforce Requirements, including	e online interactive guide which
dedicated to skills development across the offshore wind lifecycle as w	d the career opportunities ava-
opportunities in ORE.	e work of the Expert Advisory
The work of WEI and CTS also acted as the catalyst for the development	ng the establishment of subg
Skills Action Plan (published in October) and budgetary requests for 20	well as a group focused on ca-
This focus on skills and workforce requirements for offshore wind has a	ent of the DFHERIS Offshore N
creation of a number of new skills initiatives through CTS, including a r	2025+.
has also led to the creation of the newly launched Skills Offshore wind sector.	s supported the identification
WEI is also working closely with the IDA and Enterprise Ireland who are	a number of microcredentials
of the 2024 Trade Show and is working with Enterprise Ireland around	Vind Academy, a scheme focu-
Copenhagen in April 2025.	or.



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#### Lead Team

GTS supported by Policy & Research & External Affairs

#### Status

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Objective	Actions	KPIs	Report on Progress
2.1	Promote local supply chains for wind energy to contribute to circularity and local development.	Establish & build relationships with Chambers Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, IDA & DETE. Publish 6 position papers promoting	WEI continue to work closely with DETE via the DETE Industry Forum which was set up to supp development and implementation of Powering Prosperity: Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial St We have strong relationships with DETE, Enterprise Ireland and the IDA but more work needs t to develop relationships with Chambers Ireland who have endorsed the Build Our Grid campaig

to be done to develop relationships with Chambers Ireland who have endorsed the Build Our Grid campaign but we have not developed that.

WEI developed a position paper on supply chain challenges facing Ireland which was presented and discussed with DECC, DETE, Enterprise Ireland and the IDA. Shortly thereafter DETE announced the development of the Industrial Strategy for Offshore Wind which would be led out via the Supply Chain workstream of the OWDT.

DETE went on to establish the Joint Industry Forum to support the development, and subsequently implementation of the Industrial Strategy, which includes the stakeholders listed above, as well as WEI and direct industry representatives from across our membership base.

This forum supports and inputs on the progression of the actions set out in the Industrial Strategy, providing industry expertise to deliver on the actions where appropriate.

WEI has provided input to DETE and other key stakeholders on RD&I focus areas, ORE comms, plans to develop a national OW cluster and Centre of Excellence, principles to support floating wind demonstration and establishing a data baseline in relation to local content commitments).

Work needs to be carried out with GTS to deliver training in 2025.

Funding for community benefit funds by end of 2023 is more than €5 million, significantly up on the 2021 baseline, however there was a dip in 2022 so the increase has not quite been year on year.

Provide training and awareness building for members so that they can reach wider audiences and maximise the positive impact of Community Benefit

Funds.

2.2

100% members offered training by 2025

the value of local supply chains by

stakeholders.

2025 and work to promote them with

Year on year increase in Community Benefit Funds (Annual Community Benefit Report – Baseline €4.3m in 2021)

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#### Lead Team

External Affairs supported by Policy & Research

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### **Case Study Three**

## **Building wind farms** to protect nature

Renewable energy automatically provides a multitude of environmental benefits simply through the reduction of carbon emissions and mitigation of the impacts of climate change. However, this is not enough to achieve environmentally sustainable development.

There are many ways which the industry can support actions which further help to protect, enhance and restore environmental resilience through all phases of wind farm development and operation.

We now run two environmental policy focused working groups - one for onshore wind and one for offshore wind - along with a dedicated sustainability working group.

There are over 120 industry representatives from our member companies involved from a range of backgrounds including onshore and offshore wind developers, asset managers, consultancies and other service providers.

The groups establish and promote our relevant policy positions during consultation periods, but importantly, they drive the sharing of expertise and experiences from Ireland and internationally, promoting innovative ideas and technology, and encouraging uptake of improvements to current practices.

#### **Research collaborations**

These efforts have been a driving force in demonstrating the industry's commitment to continually improve and shines a light on initiatives already underway or being planned across the sector.

The Nature+Energy Project is one ongoing research collaboration between the wind industry and academia which aims to enhance biodiversity on onshore wind farms, and we hope to see the Sectoral Biodiversity Action Plan launched within this year.

We also provided foundational input to the development of Green Tech Skillnet and Skillnet Offshore Wind Academy's various environmental micro credential training and subsequently Ireland's first dedicated EIA Conference.

We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with our members and with stakeholders to deliver elevated standards alongside the rapid deployment of renewable energy required to meet Ireland's climate targets.

Wind Energy Ireland members visiting Mountlucas wind farm to learn more about peatland restoration on wind farms.

In 2024 WEI's groups also supported and engaged with many other environmental research projects and initiatives such as The Hare's Corner and **RE:HARRIER** project.

We collaborated with various environmental NGOs in workshops, webinars, training, joint statements and policy asks to the Government, sharing the common goal of an environmentally-sound transition to a zero-carbon power system.

## WIND ENERGY IRELAND

	Objective	Actions	KPIs	Report on Progress
	2.3	Support community outreach and education initiatives for wind energy awareness & showcase the contribution of wind energy to the SDGs.	50% increase in school visits conducted by WEI by 2025 (compared to 2022 baseline)	Based on results from 2024 we are on track to meet and to exceed this target assuming budget f maintained.
Strong Strong	3.1	Provide educational resources and training opportunities for members to increase the sector's contribution to SDGs and ESG.	Develop a sustainability training curriculum for the Greentech Skillnet in 2024. 150 number of participants in sustainability training in 2025.	Green Tech Skillnet is launching a sustainability platform which is free to users. Free Sustainability Self-Assessment The website at a high level offers companies the ability to do a free sustainability self-assessment number of metrics: The areas were designed with SDGs in mind. The platform will then suggest several measures to improve sustainability at that level and allow in the company to set up an action plan.
				Database of sustainability training provision We are reaching out to various organisations to understand their training provision and to upload onto the platform so that they will be a central hub for highlighting existing sustainability trainin Ireland. Training providers and relevant agencies will be given access to a trainer profile where they can unew courses that have been developed after the launch and can direct companies on how and w book.

#### Lead Team

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	Objective	Actions	KPIs	Report on Progress
	3.2	Create sustainability working group(s) to identify and disseminate best practices.	Reexamine the ToR's of the Sustainability and Biodiversity WG to ensure it is fit for purpose. Identify best practices by 2025 and promote implementation amongst our members.	It was decided to create an Onshore Environment WG under the Planning Committee to parallel Offshore Environment WG which is an active WG under Offshore Consenting. Then a standalone Sustainability WG was established under the Asset Management Committee. Informed by a poll carried out among Council members the new Sustainability WG is currently we set out its work priorities.
- A AN ANA	3.2	Use WEI events and publications to promote sustainable wind energy in Ireland, driving engagement and innovation.	Hold an inaugural Sustainability Policy Forum in 2024. 100% of WEI events promote sustainable wind energy by 2025. 150 number of participants in sustainability training in 2025.	In April 2024, the events team successfully delivered a Policy Forum, "A Sustainable Future for the Sector", which served as a platform to showcase WEI's Sustainability Strategy and featured numer presentations from key industry leaders, including an update from WindEuope on their own sust progress. The event attracted over 50 attendees, creating a dynamic environment for knowledge sharing an networking. The Policy Forum served as a pivotal platform to advance our sustainability agenda a collaboration among industry stakeholders.
	3.3	Create guidelines for sustainable events for WEI (and for sharing with members) and model the guidelines in practice through WEI convened events.	Identify and track sustainability metrics for events from 2024. Work with least 5 WEI members to encourage them to adopt sustainable event guidelines in their events by 2025. Create guidelines for sustainable events in 2023 for WEI (and for sharing with members) and model the guidelines in practice through WEI convened events in 2024,	To identify and track sustainability metrics for events from 2024, we are in the process of creating Guideline for Sustainability at WEI Events which outlines sustainability measures in place at prese can start by establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) such as carbon footprint reduction, we minimization, and energy efficiency. These KPIs will help us measure the environmental impact of events and track our progress over We will identify at least 5 WEI members to encourage them to adopt sustainable event guideline which can be achieved through targeted outreach and educational campaigns. Modelling the guidelines in practice through WEI convened events in 2024 will involve implement the sustainability guidelines in a real event setting, showcasing best practices, and demonstration feasibility and benefits of sustainable event management.

#### Lead Team

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www.windenergyireland.com

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Green

## Setting a new benchmark for sustainable events

Sustainability in event management has become a critical consideration as the industry seeks to minimise environmental impact while maximising social and economic benefits.

Wind Energy Ireland's Annual Conference attracts more than 700 attendees, including policymakers, business leaders and sustainability advocates.

The Events Team at Wind Energy Ireland has established progressive environmental practices and sustainability principles that we strive to implement at our events.

We embrace our responsibility for sustainability and environmental leadership as part of our business strategy.

- 1. Venues: The choice of venue is always based on their sustainability practice and location to minimise carbon footprint. Our venues partner with local caterers to provide plant-based meal options to reduce the environmental impact of food production. The beef option has been removed from the menu.
- 2. Zero-Waste Policy: We have eliminated single-use plastic. The venue has an effective waste management system in place that prioritises reducing, reusing and recycling. The use of cutlery at the gala dinner was reduced to prevent water consumptions. Energy efficiency is also a part of our conference and so the venue introduced new LED lighting which reduces electricity consumption.
- 3. Green Transportation: We encourage all delegates to reduce their carbon footprint and arrive in the most eco-friendly way feasible while ensuring EV charging points are on site.
- 4. LED screens and recycled materials: LED Screens are used to display conference content. We no longer use paper speaker cards and the digital podium sign is used to display names. We use QR codes for the agenda and delegate lists to prevent printing. Speaker and sponsor content is displayed on the digital screens.
- 5. Badges: Conference badges and lanyards are made from recyclable materials.

Implementing these sustainability initiatives significantly reduced waste compared to previous events. Additionally, carbon emissions were reduced by using local suppliers and taking beef off the menu. The success of these measures led to increased stakeholder engagement, our exhibitors at the event are following by example and are reducing the use of printing materials.



These initiatives set a new benchmark for sustainable event planning.



Objective	Actions	KPIs	Report on Progress	Lead Team	Status
3.3	Promote sustainability awards in the annual Irish Wind Industry Awards ceremony (e.g. wind energy in the community award)	Number of applications for sustainability awards increases year on year to 2025.	Awards not held in 2024 so this will be measured against the 2023 benchmark. To achieve the KPI we will actively promote the sustainability awards through various channels such as social media, industry publications, and relevant websites. We will look at collaborating with environmental organisations and industry partners to spread the word and garner support for the awards can be beneficial.	Events supported by External Affairs and Policy & Research	Amber
4.1	Cultivate an inclusive and diverse WEI culture, valuing and respecting all employees.	Identify a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) officer in 2023 and roll out training for all employees from 2024	Johanna Cafferkey has been identified as the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Officer. We are targeting training for February 2025.	Operations	Amber
4.1	Build skills and knowledge in WEI to drive sustainability across the organisation and membership	All employees have completed annual sustainability training/knowledge building from 2024 onwards. Our new employee induction include details of our sustainability strategy.	<ul> <li>WEI, in conjunction with our strategic HR Business Partner developed a "Belonging" document in QI covering the key principals</li> <li>Culture</li> <li>Belonging</li> <li>Psychological Safety</li> <li>Trust and Vulnerability</li> <li>Purpose</li> <li>This was supported by a facilitated conversation with the Extended Leadership Team in April</li> <li>We are planning an awareness creation exercise on the topics of "Inclusion" and "Diversity" in 2025, again facilitated by Equinox, our Strategic HR Business partner.</li> </ul>	GTS	Green



Objective	Actions	KPIs	Report on Progress	Lead Team	Status
4.2	Monitor and report on WEI's sustainability performance to stakeholders.	Annual reporting of progress towards sustainability goals from 2024 (published on website)	Completed	External Affairs supported by Operations	Green
4.2	Communicate our commitment to sustainability and our progress year on year	Develop a communications plan in 2023 as part of roll out of sustainability strategy Survey member knowledge of sustainability strategy and messaging in 2025	We launched our communications strategy to promote the WEI Sustainability Strategy in April "Earth Month". This comprised of a series of posts across various social media platforms. We also held a policy forum in April "A Sustainable Future for the Wind Sector" and it was there we formally launched the Sustainability Strategy to our members, highlighting our commitment to the KPIs therein.	External Affairs	Green
<b>2</b>	Build the capacity of the board to provide oversight of the Sustainability Strategy and use co-options / advisory positions to fill skills gaps	Annual assessment of Board skills levels related to sustainability/ESG Annual board workshop on sustainability / ESG from 2024	The WEI Board carried out an assessment of critical competencies including ESC / Sustainability related competencies in QI 2024. The Board was deemed to have sufficient competencies in the area of Sustainability to provide guidance on delivering WEI's Sustainability Strategy. Workshops on Sustainability and WEI's Sustainability Strategy were held as part of the WEI Board meetings in May and December 2024. They are now built into the WEI Board Annual calendar for these meetings each year.	CEO	Green
<b>4.2</b>	Align the WEI risk register with sustainability-related risks and opportunities (e.g., climate risk, supply chain risk, human rights).	100% Integration of sustainability-related risks and opportunities in WEI risk register by 2025	The WEI risk register was updated to take account of Sustainability related risks in H1 2024. A workshop was held in June with Board & Council members on Black Swan events which could impact our industry. Several climate and sustainability related risks were discussed and mitigations and opportunities were identified through WEI's risk review process where appropriate in Q4 2024.	CEO	Green

# Thank You!

