Environmental Policy

Policy Reviewed: April 2023

Next updated: September 2024

Next updated: January 2025

Next updated: February 2026

Responsible Officer: CEO

Last reviewed by: Laurence Clark

Approved by: CEO

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1. Introduction and Commitment

Pathways Associates CIC is dedicated to enabling disabled people to live the lives they choose as equals in their local communities. Our mission, vision, and values drive us to minimise our environmental impact while promoting inclusion, equity, and wellbeing.

We recognise that climate change and environmental degradation disproportionately affect disabled people and marginalised communities. As a small Community Interest Company, we are committed to sustainable practices that are practical, proportionate, and inclusive. Our flexible, mostly remote/event-based working model already results in a low physical footprint, but we aim to go further by embedding circular economy principles, reducing emissions, and supporting the UK's net zero goal by 2050.

This policy aligns with the UK **Environmental Improvement Plan 2025**, the waste hierarchy, mandatory **Simpler Recycling** requirements (effective 2025), and relevant legislation (e.g., Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations, Producer Responsibility Obligations). It should be read alongside our **Carbon Reduction Policy** and **Corporate Responsibility Policy**.

We welcome suggestions from colleagues, associates, disabled people we support, partners, and suppliers on how to improve our environmental performance.

2. Our Environmental Principles

We follow the **waste hierarchy** and circular economy principles:

- **Prevent / Eliminate** — Avoid creating waste wherever possible
- **Reduce** — Minimise resource use and emissions
- **Reuse** — Extend the life of items
- **Recycle / Recover** — Process materials for reuse
- **Dispose** — Manage unavoidable waste responsibly

We also commit to:

- Reducing our carbon footprint (Scope 1, 2, and relevant Scope 3 emissions where practical)

- Promoting energy and water efficiency
- Choosing low-impact travel and digital alternatives
- Sourcing responsibly and ethically
- Complying with (and where possible exceeding) environmental legislation

3. Key Commitments and Actions

As a small, flexible CIC, our actions focus on high-impact, low-burden changes:

Waste and Resources

- Comply with mandatory **Simpler Recycling** rules: separate dry recyclables (paper, card, plastic, metal, glass) and food waste (if generated) for collection by licensed carriers
- Provide appropriate recycling facilities at events, training sessions, and any shared office spaces
- Minimise single-use items — use digital documents, email instead of printing, double-sided printing only when essential
- Reuse materials (e.g., fundraising items, scrap paper for notes)
- Recycle printer cartridges, batteries, and WEEE items via charitable/ethical schemes
- Donate usable equipment to charities or individuals in need
- Purchase recycled, FSC-certified, or low-impact products (e.g., recycled paper, refillable pens, eco-friendly cleaning products)

Energy and Water

- Use energy-efficient equipment and turn off devices/lights when not needed
- Encourage home workers to adopt simple energy-saving habits
- Promote water efficiency (e.g., fix leaks, use jugs instead of bottled water at events)

Travel and Emissions

- Prioritise online meetings, training, and collaboration to eliminate unnecessary travel
- Use public transport, car sharing, cycling, or walking when in-person attendance is required

- Coordinate events and meetings to minimise journeys
- Support low-carbon travel options where feasible

Events and Home Working

- Provide reusable water bottles/jugs and encourage attendees to bring reusables
- Bring reusable cutlery/straws to events
- Minimise printed materials — use QR codes, digital handouts
- Choose accessible, low-waste venues with good recycling facilities

Procurement and Suppliers

- Prefer ethical, local, and low-impact suppliers
- Ask suppliers about their sustainability practices

4. Monitoring, Targets, and Continuous Improvement

We will:

- Set simple, realistic annual targets (e.g., reduce paper use by X%, increase digital meetings by Y%)
- Review progress annually during policy review
- Encourage all colleagues and associates to contribute ideas
- Report key actions and achievements in our annual report or to stakeholders (voluntary carbon reporting encouraged for transparency)

5. Alignment with Our Values

Our environmental actions are led by disabled people's experiences and expertise:

- **Inclusion** — Environmental practices must be accessible and not create barriers
- **Partnership** — We collaborate with partners to share sustainable approaches
- **Diversity** — Diverse perspectives shape our actions
- **Innovation** — We seek creative, low-cost ways to reduce impact
- **Integrity** — We are transparent and accountable

6. Responsibilities

- **All colleagues and associates** — Follow this policy and suggest improvements
- **Managers / event leads** — Ensure compliance at events and in operations
- **CEO / Responsible Officer** — Oversee implementation and review

This policy will be communicated to all colleagues, associates, and relevant partners. It will be reviewed annually or following major changes in legislation or activities.