

Sustainability and Environment Policy

V.2 August 2026

Version Control

Version No.	Date Approved	Approved by	Issue Date	Changes made
1	20th Jan 2022	F&GP	20th Jan 2022	First version
2	28th October 2026	F&GP	28th October 2026	-Introduction added -Statement of social responsibility added -Layout changes -Additional detail -Updated with recent CRC wellbeing initiatives - Appendices added

Introduction

The Community Relations Council recognises our responsibility to reduce our carbon and environmental footprint and make commitments to being an environmentally responsible organisation, while also ensuring as safe, supportive and sustainable environment for our employees to work.

Although CRC is not a named body in the Climate Act, we see it as our responsibility and are committed to meeting and following best practice on sustainability, the environment, and climate change.

Over the years NICRC have explored opportunities to work collaboratively in the building it shares with other organisations to improve the carbon footprint of the organisation, and to improve the services for our stakeholders. The environment and sustainability have a close relationship to community relations

CRC has an important leadership role in setting an example for the groups that we work with and stakeholders.

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out the approach to be taken by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council in minimising the environmental impact and promoting sustainability in our organisation.

This policy aims to:

- Ensure CRC are compliant with environmental and sustainability legislation
- Set out how CRC manage the impact of all our activities on the environment, and how they are mitigated
- Show how CRC will annually monitor and report on the climate impact of those activities

Wider Corporate Social Responsibility

The Community Relations Council is committed to complying with all of its Human Rights and Equality obligations and best practice. The Community Relations Council applies its equal opportunities policies to prevent any instances of direct and indirect discrimination. The Community Relations Council applies its Equality Scheme which has been approved by the Equality Commission or Northern Ireland. The scheme is developed in compliance with practice recommended by ECNI to promote equality and good relations as envisaged in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Community Relations Council applies its Disability Action Plan, which has been received by ECNI.

The Community Relations Council monitors and applies its Fraud policy and procedures including anti-bribery procedures and provide training on this to all employees. In addition to the Fraud policy, the Community Relations Council apply a suite of policies and procures to ensure appropriate anti-corruption measures are taken including its Financial Manual, Procurement procedures, Whistleblowing procedures, and Vouching and Verification procedures.

Sustainability and the Environment in relation to CRC Corporate Social Responsibility

CRC's Strategic Planning process includes an analysis of the wider opportunities and threats to our work; included in this analysis is the environment. The concept of wellbeing, common good and climate provide a link between good relations and a wide range of other issues. NICRC's Strategic Plan promises to explore the interconnection between good relations and wider issues including the environment and the climate. NICRC's Strategic Plan recognises the need for everyone to make a positive contribution in this area.

NICRC's Operational Plans routinely include the action to promote sustainable and environmentally friendly work practices.

CRC's Board is involved in sustainability and environmental issues in relation to the work of the organisation. Annually members receive a report on sustainability, while the Finance and General Purposes Committee received updates at every meeting on the work of the Equality House Premises Committee, which includes details of the budling efficiencies, health and safety, and provisions.

NICRC's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Board annually review the full Risk Register and Risk Strategy, which includes an 'environmental' category of risk.

CRC's Board recognises the interconnection between the environment, climate and other aspects of societal wellbeing. For this reason, CRC includes in its Core Welcome Statements in relation to the CRC Core Fund Grant Scheme, the opportunity for groups to submit applications that include 'work which supports and develops the next generation of practitioners as this relates to emerging challenges such as: sustainability; the environment; poverty; the changing nature of communities; and good relations from a global perspective'.

CRC's Board and Staff have committed to undertake additional learning on sustainability and the environment. For example CRC received a presentation from Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful's Climate representative and has committed to undertaking Carbon Literacy training and accreditation.

In addition to Board's oversight of sustainability at CRC, the Senior Management Team take day-to-day responsibility for the aims and achievements in relation to the environment. A 'Sustainability Champion' was appointed in 2023, and a series of policies and process were approved by the Board.

CRC's Strategic Plan

Within CRC's 2020-present Strategic Plan, there are many references to the organisation's commitment to sustainability and the environment:

- Page 6 – Our Values and Beliefs - **The common good**: CRC believes that community relationships built on trust and living well together contributes to sustainable development, the general well-being of our society and the common good.

- Page 15 – PESTEL Analysis - **The Environmental context**
  - The concepts of well-being and the common good provide a link between good relations and a wide range of other issues. With relevant stakeholders, the organisation will continue to explore the interconnection between good relations and wider issues of well-being. In some cases, this could take the form of specific programmes with positive environmental outcomes as impact on climate becomes increasingly prioritised and CRC understands the need for everyone to make a positive contribution in this area.
  - The organisation will be decreasing its use of paper as we move more of our work on-line and towards a paperless office environment.
  - During the period of the last strategic plan a considerable amount of structural change took place in central and local government. In line with wider changes, the Community Relations Council moved to share premises with other Arms-length bodies as part of the initiative to make best use of the government estate and the TEO undertook staffing and governance reviews of our organisation, leaving us fit for our purpose as we move forward. CRC expects to move to new premises again during this strategic planning period

(along with the other bodies currently based in Equality House). The new premises will be modern offices equipped for an "agile" working environment and CRC will need to alter some of its current terms and conditions in line with the wider civil service to incorporate this new approach.

In the development of the next Strategic Plan, CRC will again consider sustainability and the environment in terms of the organisations purpose and how it relates to Good Relations.

The United Nations Sustainability Goals

The United Nations reviewed the biggest issues facing the world and created 17 Sustainability Goals:



CRC utilize the goals relevant to the organisation to plot and measure where we can make a difference or should implement change.

Those applicable to CRC:

- Good Health and Wellbeing
- Gender Equality
- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Climate Action
- Peace Justice and Strong Institutions
- Partnerships For the Goals



1. Good Health and Wellbeing

Physical Health

CRC facilitated staff to take part in a health check, conducted by Chest Heart and Stroke. This check provided all staff with the opportunity to receive a bespoke health report, setting out details of their physical health, heart health, and risk levels.

Many of the aches and pains associated with Visual Display Unit (VDU) use arise because people sit in a fixed position for too long. Staff are encouraged to take regular breaks from their laptops and monitors, to prevent visual, physical and mental fatigue. Staff are reminded regularly that it is better to take frequent short breaks rather than occasional longer breaks. Staff are asked to consider combining a mix of screen based and non-screen based activity into their day, so that they are varying their work routine and not in a fixed position for longer periods of time than necessary.

Annually the Human Resources Manager will perform a Display Screen Equipment review for all staff members, to ensure that staff member's office and home working set-up is meeting the health and safety requirements, and if not, mitigations are put in place.

Staff are also entitled to reimbursement of the cost of eye tests and a contribution towards a new pair of glasses every three years, if they are regular VDU users.

Mental Health

CRC invests in mental health support for all staff members. 'Inspire Wellbeing' now 'Lena' promote mental health and provide CRC with one-to-one CareCall services, for those staff members struggling with their mental health. CRC's Human Resources Manager highlights all the services available to staff every Monday, and during all Staff Meetings. In addition,

material related to this support is provided in a file in CRC's kitchen, should staff wish to review it in private.

CRC's Human Resources Manager has undertaken Mental Health First Aid Accreditation and can perform and support staff in the event of a mental health crisis.

With the approval of CRC's Board members, the organisation signed up to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's Mental Health Charter. This Charter includes five commitments aimed at creating an open and inclusive workplace culture that respects those with mental ill health. These Commitments are:

- To create an open and inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those with metal ill health;
- To promote equality of opportunity and challenge discrimination in the workplace;
- To promote equality of opportunity in recruitment and selection for those with mental ill health;
- To identify and provide sources of information and support regarding mental ill health;
- To adopt Every Customer Counts recommendations – working towards taking positive steps to make services accessible to people with mental ill health.

In addition, CRC staff are all able to access a suite of e-training modules from mental health toolkits, resources on menopause, neurodivergence, personal wellbeing at home, resilience, and managing stress – through our subscription to the NI Civil Service's HR Training platform.



2. Gender Equality

CRC recognises the importance of gender equality, and diversity in the workplace.

CRC recognises and commits to upholding the 'United Nations Resolution 1325 Women, Peace, and Security'.

CRC are committed to our obligations set out in equality legislation, and will continue to monitor and report on our gender equality statistics, and all Section 75 areas.



3. Responsible production and consumption

CRC have produced a number of materials over the years; from books, literature; leaflets; business cards; merchandise etc. These have been valuable resources for organisations working in the Good Relations field, local and international students, academic researchers, and members of the public. However, we do recognise the need to be more mindful when printing materials. CRC have implemented and continue to operate a 'Digital First' Policy, where we invest in the design of good online material and host it on our website in the first instance, rather than printed materials.

We do recognise that sometimes the printing of materials is necessary and, in these instances, CRC commit to the use of recycled paper in our office, and sustainable production of materials by third parties.

Where merchandise is required to promote the work of CRC, only products with reusable and sustainable functions are considered. These could include canvass bags, notebooks, pens, lanyards, and seed bookmarks.

In addition, CRC considers sustainability, the environment and social value when completing all procurements. Following best practice, CRC's procurement scoring matrix includes a 10% weighted score based on the respondents tender bid and their evidencing of their commitments to 'responsible business practices and social value'.



4. Climate Action

Reduction in Carbon Output

The Community Relations Council is located in Equality House, a modern office building in Belfast that houses other Arm's Lenth Bodies. In doing so the Community Relations Council contributes to Government targets for better use of overall estates.

Reductions in the need for physical IT server hardware and the continued roll out of energy efficient lighting in Equality House have contributed to efficiencies in electricity consumption. Up until now CRC has not approved the use of Generative AI by staff, and prohibits any personal or organisational details being put into AI tools by staff members. CRC recognises the opportunities that AI present, but also recognise that Generative AI is different, and contributes to higher amounts of computational resources,

energy use, and water use, ultimately having a negative impact on the climate.

Continuing partnership under the facilities management contract, through the buildings lead-tenant, ensures that none of the waste produced at Equality House is sent to a landfill. Waste that cannot be recycled is diverted to energy recovery, and the total weight of waste production annually across the building continues to fall.

CRC's staff operate under a 'Hybrid Working Policy' which sees attendance at the office of approximately 40%, with staff able to take the opportunity to work from home the remainder of that time.

Staff are asked to consider the most environmentally appropriate decision in relation to travel to and from work commitments. Appendix 1 shows CRC's 'Meeting Decision Tree', produced in collaboration with staff. This Decision Tree asks staff key questions and raises issues to be considered before events and meetings should be planned to take place in person. These include the environment; accessibility; travel expenses of attendees etc. Staff utilise this tool to inform decisions about the best and most appropriate venue for certain engagements. Milage use has dropped significantly over the years, with the use of online technologies becoming the norm. As a result, CRC no longer pay for any additional car parking spaces for staff. CRC staff are encouraged to 'car-pool' when attending meetings, and staff are asked to be mindful of the venue when organising meeting.

CRC continues to strive to be an office that purchases no items of single-use. This includes straws, plastic cutlery, plastic cups, sachets. Staff have access to a kitchen with reusable cutlery, glasses, and cooking instruments, and therefore the use of any 'single-use' items is not necessary. Where possible, CRC will reduce the use of single plastics in office facilities and postal products.



5. Peace Justice and Strong Institutions

CRC's core aim is to 'promote a peaceful and shared society based on reconciliation and mutual trust. It was established in 1990 to lead and support change towards reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust. CRC is an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office, and a catalyst for good inter-community and inter-cultural community relations work in the region.

CRC operates under the broad suite of NICS policies. These include the management of public resources, commitments to sustainability, and operating in an to open, accountable way that builds trust in the organisation.

This Sustainable Development Goal is a clearly established aim of CRC's as we work to identify and develop effective approaches to peacebuilding and reconciliation in partnership with local people and organisations, as well as with central and local government.



6. <u>Partnerships for the Goals</u>

CRC recognise the knowledge that other organisations have on sustainability and the environment, and the learning that can gain from liaising with other groups.

CRC regularly meet and learn from other organisations implementing their own sustainability goals, including stakeholders and funded groups.

CRC recognise the link between Good Relations, sustainability and the environment and have been supporting a number of funded groups who recognise this link too. Groups that CRC supports through the funding streams conduct projects involving; mental and physical health; sport; equality and welfare support; and climate initiatives.

Social Value

As well as the environmental aspects of sustainability, NICRC are also committed to improving the outcomes beyond the environmental or financial. CRC's work to promote a peaceful and shared society aligns with the objectives of the social value concept. Social Value aims to quantify the wholistic social, economic, and environmental outcomes of a project or organisation. It asks 'if £x is spent on delivering an activity, what is the value of that same £x in terms of wider benefit for the

community'. Over the last number of years NICRC have worked with an accredited organisation to examine the social value return on a number of projects. These projects were examined against their impact on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The results showed an impressive social value return for Good Relations Awards where every £1 invested saw a return of £3.86. A similar exercise to examine Good Relations Week saw an even greater return of £4.32 for every £1 spent.

In 2025/26 NICRC completed an exercise, reviewing the impact that the 2024/25 Core Fund Grant Scheme had on the generation of other funding for the groups in receipt of an award. The exercise found that NICRC's investment of £1.25million into 28 Core Funded organisations successfully leveraged an additional £6.4million from other funders for peacebuilding work. This represents a benefit of £5.10 of additional funding generated for every £1 of NICRC invested, proving that peacebuilding is not just a social necessity, but a major economic asset for the region.

Reporting

NICRC is committed to reporting annually on its sustainability policies, achievements and climate impact statistics. Appendix 2 shows the 2025/26 reporting contained within NICRC's Annual Report and Accounts, which is presented to CRC's Finance and General Purposes Committee, Audit Committee, and full Board annually, as well as being made available to stakeholders and members of the public on the website.

Appendix 1

Meetings Guidance

Background

From March 19th 2020 to present CRC staff have been working in a Hybrid style. Staff's place of work remains the office, however, they are permitted to work from home when appropriate.

A hybrid working model balances the efficiency gained by remote working with the benefits of social interactions and creatively and innovation generated by working in-person with others. The venue of work will be based on necessity and preference, while still aiming to attend the office or external meetings 40% of the work week.

CRC staff should consider when/if holding a meeting in person is appropriate, and where these meetings could take place. This paper will review the positives and negatives of holding meetings in person and remotely, and use that to inform guidance on making decisions around meetings.

Meetings

CRC hold a number of meetings internally and externally, to fulfil the Business Plan. This includes:

External Meetings – Conferences, Roundtables, Steering Groups, Development Meetings, Information Sessions

Internal Meetings – Line Meetings, Management Team Meetings, Staff Meetings, Programme Team Meetings, Informal Meetings, Personal Development Meetings, Human Resources Meetings.

Each of these meetings will have different needs, and different desired outcomes, so different means of holding these meetings will be needed.

A one size fits all approach to meetings would not be appropriate. Staff have a number of issues to consider when deciding on the best method for holding a meeting.

Face-to-Face Meetings Vs Online Meetings

The following positive and negative effects of in person and online meetings should be considered by staff when making this decision.

Meeting Method	Positive	Negative
Face-to-face Meeting	- Visual Information is clearer for many. E,g body language, behavioural cues. - Collaborative and Creative working is easier - Potential for informal/casual conversations	- Time restrictive – time cost involved in traveling to and from a venue. - Monetary costs – booking a venue, traveling, and hospitality - May deter people with accessibility needs from attending - Limited attendance numbers
Online Meetings	- Increase in engagement. Allows those from underrepresented communities/organisations being able to attend - Can cater to formal and informal meetings/discussions - Economic savings. No travel costs or venue costs. - Environmentally friendly. Attendees and hosts do not have to travel to and from a venue, and therefore, not increasing carbon footprint. - More efficient. No travel time, no venue prep. Can focus fully on the work. - Some attendees may be more comfortable meeting and contributing at a distance	- Lack of visual information - Collaboration and active participation is harder online, especially if the meetings have a large number of attendees. - No opportunity for personal/informal aspects of meetings/conferences. - Not appropriate for all meeting types. E.g. HR meetings where face-to-face engagement is required. - Zoom fatigue. Attendees can become tired during a meeting, and unfocused, and begin working on other tasks. - Hosting meetings online might further reduce the

		participation of introverted team members.

Factors to consider when organising a meeting.

Along with the positive and negative effects of hosting meetings online and in person, there are also a number of 'bigger picture' issues that staff should consider.

Health and safety

Staff should consider the health and safety implications of holding a meeting face-to-face, and the health and safety provisions in place at the preferred venue. Staff should consult with the HR Manager to ensure that the venue is implementing all necessary H&S guidance.

Economic Cost

Staff should review the economic cost of holding an event/meeting in person. This could include a cost to CRC, but also the economic cost to those wishing to attend. Might the travel costs be prohibitive? Are the venue and hospitality costs appropriate for this meeting?

Environmental cost

CRC staff should consider all environmental costs of holding meetings in person. Will attendees be asked to travel from across Northern Ireland to one central location? Consider the reasons for this meeting, what you hope to gain from this meeting, and whether they could be achieved through an online meeting.

If a face-to-face meeting is the preference, are there any mitigations you can take to limit the environmental impact, including scheduling a number of meetings in the same area, taking public transport, car-pooling etc.

Accessibility

Considering CRC obligations set out in in the Disability Action Plan, CRC should consider whether the venue choice prohibits the attendance of persons with disabilities, or other underrepresented groups. Is there an alternative way for people to participate in the meeting, if held in person?

Holding meetings online has increased participation and engagement at CRC events. Staff should consider whether the face-to-face nature of the meeting is more important than a wide variety of attendees.

Conversely, digital exclusion should also be considered. Where an individual or group may not have access to digital equipment necessary to hold a meeting online, CRC staff should consider a face to face meeting the acceptable method. Groups without access to digital equipment or low broadband signal should have the same access to CRC staff and meetings as those with these facilities.

Location of the meeting

When deciding on the venue for a meeting, staff should consider the nature of the meeting, and whether the venue is an appropriate location for the discussion taking place.

Is the discussion of a sensitive nature, and therefore would be more appropriate to hold in a secure/online location. If confidential information is being discussed, it would not be appropriate to hold this meeting in a public place, including coffee shops etc. The decision on what 'confidential information' is is at the discretion of staff members, but could include personal data, details of grants, human resources discussions, financial discussions, and strategic discussions.

MEETING GUIDANCE

DECISION TREE

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

DOES PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE ALLOW FOR LARGE NUMBERS TO MEET?

YES

IS THERE AN ECONOMIC COST TO HOLDING THIS MEETING IN PERSON? THIS COULD BE TRAVEL OR VENUE TO CRC OR ATTENDEES

NO

THERE ARE NO CONSIDERABLE COSTS TO HOLDING THIS MEETING ONLINE

IS THERE AN ECON/ENVIRO COST TO HOLDING THIS MEETING IN PERSON? THIS COULD BE TRAVEL OR VENUE TO CRC OR ATTENDEES

YES

THE COSTS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR THE NEEDS OF THIS MEETING AND THE DESIRED OUTCOMES CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED FACE TO FACE

THE ECONOMIC/ENVIRO COSTS OF HOLDING THIS MEETING IN PERSON ARE VERY HIGH, AND OUTWEIGH THE BENEFITS OF FACE-TO-FACE

NO

A VIRTUAL MEETING IS THE ONLY APPROPRIATE OPTION

WILL THERE BE CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY THAT MAY FEEL EXCLUDED BY HOLDING THIS MEETING FACE-TO-FACE, INCLUDING THOSE WITH DISABILITIES?

NO

CRC HAVE TAKEN ACCESSIBILITY INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN PLANNING THIS MEETING AND THE VENUE IS ACCESSIBLE

YES

THE VENUE MAY NOT BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, THEREFORE, ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE PUT IN PLACE TO ALLOW FOR THEIR ATTENDANCE

THE MEETING VENUE WOULD NOT BE COMPLETELY ACCESSIBLE AND A KEY AUDIENCE WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO ATTEND. THEREFORE, AN ONLINE MEETING WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE

ALL FACTORS HAVE BEEN TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION AND STAFF BELIEVE AN IN-PERSON MEETING WOULD BE MOST APPROPRIATE

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If the staff member has concluded that the meeting should be held online, they should also consider whether the group or individual they wish to meet would have access to the digital systems and capabilities necessary to attend a meeting online.

If the staff member has concluded, following this exercise, that an in-person meeting is the only appropriate way to host this event, then the following points should be considered:

- **Staff should use public transport or car share, where appropriate to do so, to mitigate any environmental costs.**
- **Staff should consider scheduling multiple meetings in the area on the same day as this event, to mitigate the environmental impact.**
- **Staff should consider available technologies to allow those who may feel excluded due to accessibility issues, the ability to attend virtually.**
- **Staff should consider how appropriate the venue choice is, considering the nature of the discussions taking place. Public venues would not be appropriate for the discussion of sensitive issues.**

Appendix 2 – Annual Sustainability Reporting

Sustainability report 2025/26

The Community Relations Council is committed to ensuring that sustainable development becomes an integral part of our business and corporate social responsibility. Over the years NICRC have explored opportunities to work collaboratively in the building it shares with other organisations (Equality House) to improve the carbon footprint. Additionally, we have introduced a number of policies and initiatives to improve the carbon footprint of the organisation, and to improve the services for our stakeholders.

A. Strategic and Business Planning

NICRC's Strategic Plan (2020-to-present) includes an analysis of the wider opportunities and threats to NICRC's work; included in this analysis is the environment. The concept of wellbeing, common good and climate provide a link between good relations and a wide range of other issues. NICRC's Strategic Plan promises to explore the interconnection between good relations and wider issues including the environment and the climate. NICRC's Strategic Plan recognises the need for everyone to make a positive contribution in this area.

NICRC's Operational Plans routinely include the action to promote sustainable and environmentally friendly work practices.

B. NICRC Board and Committees

NICRC's Board is very involved in sustainability and environmental issues in relation to the work of the organisation. Annually members receive a report on sustainability, while the Finance and General Purposes Committee receives updates at every meeting on the work of the Equality House Premises Committee, which includes reports on building efficiencies and recycling provisions.

NICRC's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee annually review the full Risk Register and Risk Strategy which includes an 'environment' category of risk.

CRC's Board recognises the interconnection between the environment, climate and other aspects of societal wellbeing. For this reason, CRC decided to include, as a Welcome Statement for the annual Core Fund Grant Scheme, the opportunity for groups to submit application that includes 'work which supports and develops the next generation of practitioners as this relates to emerging challenges such as: sustainability; the environment; poverty; the changing nature of communities; and good relations from a global perspective'.

C. Management Oversight of Sustainability at NICRC

As well as the Board's oversight of sustainability at NICRC, the Senior Management Team take day-to-day responsibility for the aims and achievements in relation to the environment. A sustainability Champion was appointed in 2023, and a series of processes and policies were approved by the Board and implemented by staff members. These include:

- 100% use of recycled paper
- Digital First Policy
- Implementation of Cloud based digital file storage and paperless office
- Utilisation of online video conference software
- Only reusable sustainable merchandise purchased, nothing with a single use
- Compiling a 'Meeting Decision Tree' setting out considerations staff members should make when setting up meetings, including health and safety, economic cost, environmental cost, and accessibility.
- Reduction in the use of Single Use Plastic

D. Emissions

The Community Relations Council is located in Equality House, a modern office building in Belfast that houses other Arm's Length Bodies. In doing so the Community Relations Council contributes to Government targets for better use of overall estate. The Community Relations Council participates in the Equality House facilities committee with the other Arm's Length Bodies.

The Community Relations Council's footprint within Equality House is 3,032sq foot of the 35,555sq foot building. The outputs and energy usage for Equality House are provided for the full building, therefore 8.5% of that can be attributed to NICRC for reporting purposes.

During the year Equality House produced 11,561kg of waste, 100% of which was either recycled or recovered for fuel production. See figures below:

Area	Total Waste	% Recycled	% recovered waste (used for fuel production
Equality House	11,561kg	85.82%	14.18%
8.5% apportioned to NICRC	982.68	85.82%	14.18%

Reduced dependency on physical servers and implementation of energy efficient lighting in 2024/25 have contributed to a 20% reduction in electricity consumption.

Area	Total Energy Consumption Q1	Total Energy Consumption Q2	Total Energy Consumption Q3	Total Energy Consumption Q4
Equality House	41,460.65kWh	41,368.94	45,498.68	41,656.28
8.5% apportioned to NICRC	3,524kWh	3,516	3,867	3,541

These efficiencies have also resulted in Equality House being able to display an Energy Certificate rating down from Category C63 to Category C58 in 2025/26. This rating system is based on CO2 emissions on a scale of 0 to 150. A lower rating indicates a more efficient building. Equality House's score is indicative of efficient operation.

Equality House water consumption during the 2025/26 year, set out in the table below, represents a low figure:

Area	August 2025 Water Use Reading	February 2026 Water Use Reading
Equality House	83m^3	84m^3
8.5% apportioned to NICRC	7.1m^3	7.14m^3

Equality House water consumption during the 2025/26 year, set out in the table below, represents a low figure

E. Travel/Fuel

Since the introduction of the Hybrid Working Policy and Meeting Decision Tree (which helps staff decide on whether to run an event or meeting in-person or on-line) NICRC has seen a significant decrease in milage and therefore reduced emissions generated. The 2019/20 year's data is included below for comparison, as a period before the policies were adopted. The table shows that, since the introduction of these policies, staff milage has reduced by over 66%.

Year	Milage	Kg CO_2e Emissions *
2025/26	4,594.60	1,236.6
2019/20	13,074.30	3,805

*NICRC does not collect data on car and engine size and therefore these figures are based on the 'average' car conversion factor.

F. Office Paper Consumption

Staff operate a digital-first policy, and therefore printer usage is very minimal. NICRC's office has therefore installed one integrated printer/scanner/copier machine reducing the reliance on multiple printer systems. Details of NICRC's 2025/26 office printing is included below:

	2025/26 Paper Printed
Q1	385
Q2	1,924
Q3	3,535
Q4	803

Where printer paper is used, NICRC purchase only recycled paper. Using recycled paper is the most environmentally friendly option, as the production of the paper uses less energy, produces fewer emissions, and cuts down on landfill waste.

iv) Other Matters - Social Value

A. Social Value

As well as the environmental aspects of sustainability, NICRC are also committed to improving outcomes beyond the financial. The purpose of NICRC's work is to promote a peaceful and shared society based on reconciliation and mutual trust. This aligns with the objectives of the social value concept. Social Value aims to quantify the wholistic social, economic, and environmental outcomes of a project or organisation. It asks 'if £x is spent on delivering an activity, what is the value of that same £x in terms of wider benefit for the community'. Over the last number of years NICRC have worked with an accredited organisation to examine the social value return on a number of projects. These projects were examined against their impact on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The results showed an impressive social value return for Good Relations Awards where every £1 invested saw a return of £3.86. A similar exercise to examine Good Relations Week saw an even greater return of £4.32 for every £1 spent.

In 2025/26 NICRC completed an exercise, reviewing the impact that the Core Fund Grant Scheme had on the generation of other funding for the groups in receipt of an award. The exercise found that NICRC's investment of £1.2million into 30 Core Funded organisations successfully leveraged an additional £6.9million from other funders for peacebuilding work. This represents a benefit of £6 of additional funding generated for every £1 of NICRC invested, proving that peacebuilding is not just a

social necessity, but a major economic asset for the region. In addition, the exercise found that the Core Fund Grant Scheme had a Social Value return of £5.69 for every £1 invested.

As well as the external social value benefits of NICRC's work, the organisation is also invested in the mental health and wellbeing of all staff. Staff have access to Inspire's Employee Assistance Programme, providing wellbeing and therapeutic interventions, at no cost to staff members. In addition, NICRC's Human Resources Manager undertook Mental Health First Aid accreditation training in 2025/26, and the organisation signed up to the Equality Commission's Mental Health Charter.

B. Procurement

Within NCIRC's Procurement Policy, there is a requirement that all tender exercises include a scorable value for the bidders' social value contributions. Responses to recent tenders have shown bidders adherence to HR wage policies, environmental commitments, and wellbeing initiatives. Equality House's own Facilities Management Contract supports the Living Wage policy and in 2023/24 adopted the Real Living Wage policy.

The Community Relations Council will continue to promote and develop initiatives to improve our environmental and social impact, as well as recognising the interconnectedness of good relations work and sustainability.