

CLIMATE

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SPECIAL COMMERCIAL SUPPLEMENT

To mark Earth Month, 33 of Ireland’s ESG pioneers tell *Jo Linehan* what inspires them to drive climate progress and seek social justice

AIMEE CONNOLLY, FOUNDER OF SCULPTED BY AIMEE

Founded in 2016, Sculpted by Aimee has become a beloved beauty brand in Ireland and abroad. Its founder Aimee Connolly underpins each product with a sustainable and ethical ethos. From its vegan and cruelty-free formulations to a pioneering recycling programme, Sculpted by Aimee is an example of a brand that incorporates environmental action into its operations.



“Sustainability has never been an afterthought for us – it’s something we weave into every decision, from packaging to formulations,” Connolly says. “I’m inspired by our customers, who care just as much about what’s in their products as how they impact the planet. Knowing we can create beauty solutions that are both effective and responsible keeps me motivated to push for better, more sustainable innovations.”

JAMES McMANUS, DIRECTOR OF B LAB IRELAND

McManus has been key to establishing B Corporation in Ireland, a highly sought-after environmental and social accreditation. B Lab is part of the B Corp network, working to drive change through policies, tools and programs. Making progress in sustainability takes optimism and hard work, he says.

“Focusing too much on the negatives can take a toll on your mental health, so I try to stay grounded in the amazing work that’s already happening around the world. That’s hard to do at times, but seeing more people and businesses taking meaningful action every day is inspiring. I take inspiration from the Irish B Corps, setting a new standard for business in Ireland. They are proving it’s possible to run a successful business while being kind to people and the planet.”

BEATRIZ GILLI, FOUNDER OF EU.ENGINEER

As a project consultant at BTY Group, a global consultancy firm, Gilli contributes to major infrastructure and construction projects across Ireland. However, when she moved to Dublin from Brazil in 2016, she faced significant barriers to establishing her career.

Her experience led her to establishing EU.engineer, a project that supports engineers and architects in building their careers across Europe. She also hosts Building Bridges, a professional networking event that brings professionals from various industries together to share knowledge and open doors to new opportunities.



“EU.engineer is a mission to strengthen, support and inspire professionals from immigrant communities, helping them rediscover their strengths, skills and value,” Gilli says. “We show them that it’s possible to be respected and recognised and that we can contribute meaningfully to Irish society and other European communities.”

TOBIAS PEDERSEN, HEAD GROUNDSKEEPER AT BALLYMALOE HOUSE HOTEL

Ballymaloe has always had a strong connection with nature. From its use of biomass energy on-site since the 1980s to its farm-to-fork food ethos, sustainable farming and rewilding efforts, the east Cork



cookery school educates its visitors on the importance of living in harmony with the earth. Tobias Pedersen is key to Ballymaloe’s sustainability charge.

“What inspires me is the small but powerful changes I can make in my own patch and the joy of seeing nature respond,” Pederson says. “If just one person on my habitat and biodiversity tour takes something away and puts it into practice, that’s a change for the better. I have four wonderful grandchildren, and I remain hopeful for their future – but only if we embrace nature-based solutions and act with urgency and care.”



Taking action for Earth

“More and more, people aren’t just checking sustainability boxes — they’re living it, challenging us to do more and better. That momentum is contagious

TANIA BANOTTI, DIRECTOR OF CREATIVE IRELAND

The Creative Ireland Action Fund initiative from the Creative Ireland Programme was the first of its kind in Europe. Now in its fourth year, it has supported 57 projects across Ireland to raise awareness around climate change and empower local communities to change behaviours. Its director, Tania Banotti, is passionate about the potential of creativity to foster climate action.



“Seeing creative climate action projects on the ground all over Ireland gives me hope for the future. There is energy and willingness across the farming community, inner-city renters, commuters, chartered directors, and students to learn and adapt.”

TAD KIRAKOWSKI, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF VOICE IRELAND

Voice is an environmental NGO that works to reduce waste, educate consumers and help society move towards circularity. Its impactful campaigns have helped progress important legislation and shift societal behaviours. Tad Kirakowski has been chief executive of the organisation since 2023.

“I think a mixture of anger and optimism propels all activists; you need that fire in your belly to get up and say, this isn’t right; I need to do something about this. In my role, I engage with communities regularly, and the energy and ambition in those rooms can be infectious and reminds me why we do this work,” Kirakowski says.

ALEX PETIT, GROUP EXECUTIVE CHEF AT TRIGON HOTELS

Tackling food waste continues to be at the forefront of the hospitality industry, and Trigon Hotel Group has made significant strides. The group has reduced food waste by 12.5 per cent at its properties, the



Metropole Hotel and Cork International Hotel.

“Shifting practices in our industry, whether through local sourcing, zero-waste dishes, sustainable actions, charity partnership actions or seasonal cooking, can ripple far beyond the hotel or restaurant walls,” Petit says.

“It’s about creating places that feel both luxurious and responsible, showing that sustainability isn’t about sacrifice, but smarter and more intentional living.”

GILLY TAYLOR AND BRIAN O’TOOLE, CO-FOUNDERS OF WILDACRES

Wildacres is a multi-award-winning nature reserve and biodiversity education centre set on 34 acres in southeast Wicklow. Co-founders Gilly Taylor and Brian O’Toole run the environmental social enterprise, which is dedicated to biodiversity restoration, protection, monitoring and education.



“Two things give us hope for the future,” the couple says. “First, nature responds so positively when given the opportunity to thrive. We have seen incredible results from habitat creation and restoration at Wildacres since we started in 2017.

“The second thing that inspires us is the immensely positive reaction from people at our educational workshops, tours, and group events at Wildacres. Whether it is a corporate group tree-planting day or individuals learning how to create a wildlife pond, visitors are enthusiastic about discovering what they can do to help bring Ireland’s precious biodiversity back. The groundswell of actions taking place gives us hope.”

JOE MCGIRR, FOUNDER OF THE BOATYARD DISTILLERY

In 2023, the Irish spirit maker the Boatyard Distillery became the first B Corporation-certified distillery on the island. Among its innovative initiatives is a bottle refill programme that reduced packaging by 84 per cent.

“We’re incredibly inspired by the landscape and waters of Lough Erne,” its founder, McGirr, says. “This place isn’t just where we work; it’s our homeland. The people, the landscape, and the spirit of Fermanagh push us to create something honest and meaningful.



“What gives me hope is the growing shift across our industry. It’s no longer just about product, but purpose. That collective energy and sense of responsibility keep me optimistic about the future.”

PHILIP CONNOR, HEAD OF ENERGY SERVICES AT PINERGY

As Ireland continues to make slow but steady progress in the energy transition, visionary expertise is essential not only to help lead businesses but consumers, too. Connor is an aircraft and marine engineer who has turned his skill set to renewable energy and energy efficiency at Pinergy. This Irish-owned smart energy company supplies 100 per cent green electricity to residential and commercial customers nationwide.

“What gets me out of bed is knowing real change is possible and, quite frankly, the stubborn optimism that we can do better. What gives me hope is seeing that shift from rhetoric to action. More and more, people aren’t just checking sustainability boxes — they’re living it, challenging us to do more and better. That momentum is contagious, and it’s what drives me every day.”

PATRICIA WHITE, MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER AT DROGHEDA CREDIT UNION

Local action can result in nationwide change, and nowhere is that more evident than at Credit Unions. As part of the not-for-profit financial co-operative’s ESG strategy, green financial initiatives and sustainable lending products are becoming widely available and accessible. Drogheda Credit Union has focused on encouraging energy-efficient investment in the town and promotes financial literacy and environmental awareness among young people.

“I take great encouragement from the wider credit union movement, which drives positive change at a national level,” White says. “Credit Unions across Ireland are proving that finance can be a force for good,

embedding sustainability and community support at the heart of everything they do. At Drogheda Credit Union, we are proud to be part of this movement, ensuring financial wellbeing and sustainability go hand in hand.”

PAUL O’SULLIVAN, CO-FOUNDER OF IRELANDSEYE KNITWEAR

Since it was founded in 1988, IrelandsEye, a family-run knitwear company, has focused on creating contemporary Irish-made, hand-finished pieces. In recent years, IrelandsEye, based in



Baldoye, Dublin 13, has worked on its operations’ energy efficiency and reduced waste by donating spare wool to schools, organisations and knitting groups. “It’s clear we need to be more sustainable as a society, and I believe in

making things that are better and last longer,” O’Sullivan says.

“I’m delighted and proud to be in a position with IrelandsEye to do so. I have always had great faith in the ingenuity of humankind. We’ve always solved problems in the past, often seemingly insurmountable ones. I’ve no doubt we’ll get on top of our environmental issues; we’ve no choice.”

MARTIN AND VANESSA DONOVAN, FOUNDERS OF KILLADOON MILK

Killadoon Milk is an award-winning family-run dairy farm in Celbridge, Co Kildare. The team is renowned for championing a zero-single-use plastic production process via an innovative glass bottle refill system that allows customers to purchase reusable glass bottles or bring their own, refilling them directly from vending machines.

“We are proud to be the first Irish dairy to introduce glass bottles into the retail setting using a network of vending machines,” the Donovans say.

“Every refill and interaction with a consumer passionate about supporting local and sustainable food sources fills us with hope and drives us to keep pushing forward.”

LAURA COSTELLO, HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY AND PLANET SERVICES AT THINKHOUSE

Costello leads a multi-disciplinary team at Thinkhouse, an independent, Irish B Corp-certified agency, with clients including Keelings, Heineken and Bord Bia.



“The power of culture and storytelling inspires me,” Costello says.

“It bridges policy and poetry, logic and feeling, and helps us imagine more just, joyful, and regenerative futures. What gives me hope is the rising tide of people daring to redesign the world: young visionaries, courageous storytellers, radical business and community leaders, and everyday acts of care that signal a deeper shift towards a more conscious, connected way of being.”

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