Following commitments by the Tánaiste and Secretary General to ‘green the Foreign Ministry’, the Embassy decided to attempt to lead by example and provide learning for the Mission team on practical steps to implement this commitment. The “Greening the Mission” initiative was guided by an annual action plan that was formulated through a series of sessions involving all staff. A core “Green Team” composed of volunteers then led on implementation and follow-up.

The Action Plan for November 2019 – Dec 2020 (Annex A) focused on optimising staff, facilities and systems, as well as raising the Green profile of the Embassy through our public diplomacy and communication. A summary of progress made in 2020 is set out below.

Facilities

- Installation of a 30kWp solar electricity system over the car port, reducing our consumption of grid electricity by 60%
- Rain water harvesting for irrigation of the garden and washing cars (capacity 8,000L)
- Solar panels in the kitchen used to heat water, and a solar energy system on the kitchen roof provides lighting day and night.
- Installation of automatic water taps in the washroom to reduce water consumption
- Motion sensors on the lights installed in the washrooms and on security lights
- Change of lighting in the Mission and Official Residence to LED lights
- Producing compost for use in the Mission’s vegetable gardening (Climate Smart Gardening)
Staff

- Green Champion identified and acknowledged during staff awards
- Recycling drive every two weeks
- Waste management/waste separation in the kitchen to allow for composting/recycling
- Replaced single use plastics with refillable water bottles
- Climate smart gardening was a successful undertaking whereas planting and harvesting of fruits, vegetables and herbs for the consumption by the Mission team.
- Default two sided printing set on shared printers. Individual printers removed from offices.
- Introduction of desk plants to better air purification
- Include frequent updates on Greening the Mission in the weekly Embassy Meeting

Communication and Public Diplomacy

- Deliberate effort to raise the Embassy’s Green Profile, with production of a video showcasing the Embassy’s greening efforts
- Regular tweets and articles to highlight efforts in greening the Mission including the recycling drives and beach clean-up
- Communication and engagement adapted to the remote working context with sharing of pictures through WhatsApp group to keep the team spirit and incorporate greening initiatives at home.
- Greening the Mission is included as a standing point on the SMT agenda
- Greening the Mission integrated into Business planning and PMDS
- Tracking of fuel, energy, water usage, travel and volume of waste recycled.
- Electronic banking contributes to reduce paper consumption

Summary Jan-Dec 2020:

- Electricity utilisation -60% ▼
- Electricity expenditure -53% ▼
- Water utilisation -21% ▼
- Water expenditure - 41%▼

Lessons Learnt and Priorities for 2021

Continuous support, engagement and awareness is required to maintain positive behaviour change. Regular reminders and internal sessions help to foster awareness across the Embassy, and routine data dissemination helps to boost team morale.

In 2021, we will continue to strengthen engagement within the Mission by soliciting opinions across the Embassy team, encouraging task-sharing beyond the Green Team and adopting to remote working as needed. In addition to tracking quantitative data on power, water and recycling, we will track behaviour change among staff more broadly, including the quality of ongoing interventions. We will also seek opportunities to share learning with other EU Missions in the country on how to reduce further our carbon footprint.