



## **Natural Voice Network Sustainable Development Policy**

### **Foreword**

I am profoundly grateful that as a Network we have agreed to create a sustainable development policy. Indeed, this ethos has been there from the earliest days. Those of us who pioneered the Network laid these as firm foundations, so what we are doing now is simply to bring to light what has been there all along. This policy will make clear and articulate this. In our Code of Practice, there is the statement from one of our members which sums this up: "A cultural injustice was perpetrated on the British people during the 19th Century, which effectively robbed a large number of people of their hitherto-held belief in their ability and right to sing". It is clear from reading the About Us - Principles and Code of Practice page and the President's page on our website that these have been core to who we are and what we hold to be precious and central to both our ideas and practice.

*Frankie Armstrong, NVN President*

## Part 1 - Context

The NVN is committed to the principles of Sustainable Development, as set out by the United Nations in its [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). This is a commitment by all countries on Earth to ensure a sustainable future for the planet and the life which it supports. The UN Agenda recognises 5 interlinked goals around sustainable development, centred around:

- **People**
- **Planet**
- **Prosperity**
- **Peace**
- **Partnership**

[United Nations 2015](#) (full details in Appendix)

As a network, our approach to sustainable development is about how we realise these principles in our work. We encourage our members to recognise the importance of sustainable development and to strive to make a positive contribution to the realisation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular with reference to good health and wellbeing (§3), quality education (§4), decent work and economic growth (§8), reduced inequalities (§10), sustainable cities and communities (§11), and responsible consumption and production (§12). In doing so, we adhere to the principle: "If I can't change the world, I'll change the world within my reach." <sup>1</sup>

We recognise that the prime purpose of the NVN is to promote group singing. A Sustainable Development Policy is about encouraging - rather than compelling - our membership to consider issues of sustainable development within their practice, as citizens in a position of responsibility who may positively influence changing attitudes and behaviours.

### Policy Review

Our Sustainable Development Policy and related aims and achievements will be reviewed every three years as we aspire to further deepen and embed our sustainability practice within the culture of our singing communities.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://youtu.be/2MYTNDkedBI>

## Part 2 - Implementation

### Sustainable Development and NVN Practice

At its Annual General Meeting in 2020, the NVN membership voted to adopt a commitment to sustainable development in an update to our Code of Practice at Section G:

‘We are committed to the principles of sustainability in our voice work, promoting practices which minimise environmental impact; supporting equality and social justice; and advocating fair remuneration for work undertaken.’

As a result, the trustees accepted the responsibility to develop this commitment into a policy and to facilitate the implementation of principles of sustainable development into our practice across the Network. We resolved to:

1. Support our fellow members to integrate sustainable development principles into their professional lives and work;
2. Be a positive role model for our members and associates and for other organisations with which we work through our own individual sustainability principles;
3. Review our sustainability aims and achievements and share best practice with other NVN practitioners, to deepen and embed our sustainability practice within the culture of our singing communities;
4. Comply with and aim to exceed where possible UK legislation, regulations and codes of practice relating to sustainable development.

### Putting Principles into Practice

In the following sections, we suggest ways in which a consideration of the principles of sustainable development might be realised in practice. These suggestions are by no means exhaustive, but serve to illustrate some of the ways in which principles of sustainable development might be applied in our work.

### SDG3 Good Health and Wellbeing

- A. Recognising that group singing is more than just a pastime or hobby: for many participants, it is a source of positive health and wellbeing.
- B. Promoting singing practices which support positive health and wellbeing outcomes; e.g. warming up appropriately, developing good technique.
- C. Demonstrating leadership approaches which support psychological wellbeing; e.g. facilitating a non-judgemental atmosphere, welcoming new and potential participants, making ‘reasonable adjustments’ to working practices to accommodate the needs of individual participants.

- D. Recognising the importance of self-care as a vital resource for maintaining a sustainable practice.

## SDG4 Quality Education

- A. Ensuring our singing teaching/voice work is inclusive and equally accessible to participants with all levels of education and experience.
- B. Ensuring we teach in ways that are age, disability and gender sensitive.
- C. Providing safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all participants, which support their actualisation as human beings.

## SDG8 Decent Work and Economic Growth

- A. Advocating for and seeking to receive fair pay for the work we do, using the real living wage as a minimum standard.
- B. Promoting open and non-judgemental discussion and transparency within the NVN of rates of pay, charges for choirs and workshops, and running costs such as venue hire.

## SDG10 Reduced Inequalities

- A. Actively seeking out opportunities to develop work with individuals and groups of people who may feel excluded from our practice.
- B. Considering ways to make our practices more accessible, especially to those on low incomes.
- C. Taking up opportunities for CPD, such as training in diversity and inclusion.

## SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities

- A. For our singing activities, choosing venues that are accessible by public transport, especially to those with disabilities.
- B. Being mindful of the opportunities for social cohesion which group singing affords, and recognising and promoting the singing group as a community asset which can help combat loneliness, isolation and mental health challenges.

## SDG12 Responsible Consumption and Production

- A. Embedding principles of sustainable development within our day-to-day working practices as they relate to:
  - a. Travel to rehearsals, workshops and other events
  - b. Equipment and resources and the energy they consume
  - c. Sustainable food sources
  - d. Printing materials

- e. Recycling
  - f. Use of digital technologies (carbon footprint).
- B. Planning for our Annual Gathering to be as sustainable as possible by:
- a. Providing as far as possible menus that have least environmental impact; i.e. are vegan and use ingredients that are locally sourced.
  - b. Engaging with the venue to improve their environmental and sustainability policy.
  - c. Encouraging members to travel to and from the gathering via public transport or car share wherever possible.
- C. Considering issues of sustainable development in how we plan, deliver and participate in singing weekends and holidays:
- a. Investigating the most ethical and sustainable ways of planning singing holidays overseas, including exploring alternative modes of transport, recognising that while overseas travel may contribute to our goals of intercultural encounter and flying may offer the cheapest and fastest way of reaching our destination, flying is also a significant contributor to the climate crisis.
  - b. Considering the potential for providing similar experiences closer to home.
  - c. For holidays within the UK, encouraging participants to travel via public transport, bicycle or car share wherever possible.

## SDG1 No Poverty

- A. Giving consideration to setting fees and costs for our work to ensure that all potential participants have equal access to singing events and groups; e.g. offering a sliding scale of charges for those on low incomes and those who may be economically disadvantaged by virtue of gender or disability.

## SDG5 Gender Equality

- A. Acknowledging that choirs and singing groups can act as important spaces for promoting gender equality and personal empowerment; e.g. by empowering women and girls to find their voice and by promoting positive images of singing for those of any gender.

## SDG6 Clean Water and Sanitation / SDG13 Climate Action / SDG14 Life below Water / SDG15 Life On Land

- A. Recognising the potential for events such as Sing for Water, Sing for the Trees or Earth Day to raise awareness of the causes of climate change, including the historical disempowerment of indigenous/tribal peoples and the abuse of their land and resources, and to contribute to positive environmental impacts through charitable activity.
- B. Teaching and composing songs that celebrate the natural world and biodiversity.

## SDG16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

- A. Recognising the potential for our singing work to support a range of causes and sectors of the population and to mark important occasions in the realm of social justice and humanitarian action, including:
- Human Rights initiatives
  - Work with people who are asylum seekers or have refugee status
  - Work with homeless people
  - International Women's Day celebrations
  - Multi-faith events
  - LGBTQ+ projects and events
  - Climate justice events and initiatives

## SDG17 Partnerships to Achieve the Goal

- A. Financial partnerships: participating in singing projects and events which fundraise or otherwise generate financial resources for economically disadvantaged people, regions or communities.
- B. Trade partnerships: acknowledging that the Network and its members may benefit financially and professionally from using song material originating in less affluent or well-resourced communities or societies, and seeking out ways of equitable 'trading' of such resources or opportunities for reciprocity; e.g. by directly supporting culture-bearers in their own communities or by fundraising for charities which support projects in the country or community of origin.
- C. Multi-stakeholder partnerships: seeking to create partnerships that enable the sharing of knowledge, skills, technological and financial resources through effective public, public-private or civil society partnerships (e.g. choirs in health support settings, workplace choirs), and sharing our experiences and expertise within the Network and beyond.

## Appendix

### United Nations Agenda – Goals for Sustainable Development

- PEOPLE: We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.
- PLANET: We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.
- PROSPERITY: We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.
- PEACE: We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.
- PARTNERSHIP: We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focussed in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.

[\(United Nations 2015\)](#)

Policy adopted October 2020

To be reviewed in 2023