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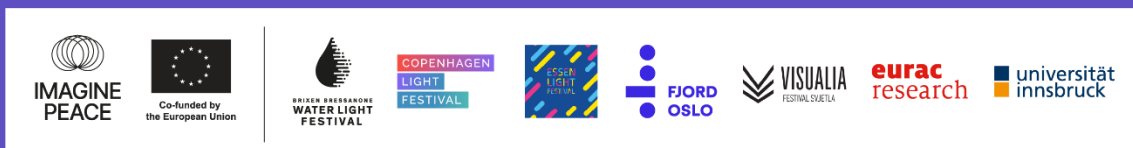


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Sustainability at the Water Light Festival

an Imagine Peace Sustainability Report

May 2026



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1. Introduction

The Water Light Festival is one of the leading light art festivals in the Alpine region and a distinctive cultural event in the historic city of Brixen/Bressanone, South Tyrol. Since its first edition in 2017, the festival has established itself as a unique platform at the intersection of light art, environmental awareness, and cultural heritage, transforming the city's historic urban landscape into an immersive open-air gallery. Held biennially, the festival attracts both local and international visitors and has gained recognition for its site-specific artistic interventions, its engagement with contemporary social and environmental themes, and its ability to connect artistic innovation with the unique identity of Brixen/Bressanone. By bringing together artists from across Europe and beyond, the Water Light Festival promotes creativity and fosters reflection on important societal topics.

The 2026 edition took place from April 29th to May 16th in the historic centre of Brixen/Bressanone and selected locations in the surrounding area, including Franzensfeste/Fortezza. Under the motto “*Water is Life – Light is Art*” and within the broader framework of the European *Imagine Peace* project, local and international artists transformed fountains, waterways, squares, courtyards, churches, and cultural-historical landmarks into a diverse exhibition trail of light-based artworks. More than twenty installations and performances invited visitors to explore the city through a series of curated experiences that combined artistic expression with reflections on peace, sustainability, and social cohesion. Many of the installations were freely accessible, reinforcing the festival’s inclusive and public character. Through collaborations with artists, cultural institutions, tourism stakeholders, scientific partners, and international festival networks, the Water Light Festival also serves as a platform for experimentation, dialogue, and knowledge exchange in the fields of light art, placemaking, and sustainable cultural development.

In 2026, the Water Light Festival strengthened its commitment to sustainability and stakeholder engagement through its participation in the *Imagine Peace* project. As part of this initiative, the festival conducted a sustainability audit based on multiple guidelines assessing economic, social and environmental dimensions. As part of this process, a public questionnaire was distributed from April 29th to May 26th, 2026, spanning the festival period as well as additional days to maximize participation. In total, the survey collected 106 responses, of which 85 were fully completed and a further 21 were partially usable. The questionnaire was promoted through multiple channels, including QR codes displayed on the printed maps and at key festival locations. In addition, two tablets were made available on site to allow visitors to complete the survey directly. The survey was also published on the festival’s website, while supplementary social media posts further supported outreach and encouraged participation.

Building on the insights gathered through the questionnaire, as well as inputs from the festival organizers and members of the audit committee, a structured sustainability audit was conducted on June 19th, 2026. The audit assessed the festival’s performance at the levels of management, processes and results. The assessment of the results level was primarily based on the questionnaire findings and further enriched through collaborative discussion among participants. The audit consisted of a half-day online workshop involving the scientific partners, the Water Light Festival team, two representatives of the partner association Fjord Oslo, and a local stakeholder. Each guideline was reviewed individually, with scores assigned based on available evidence and stakeholder input. This process resulted in a comprehensive assessment of the festival’s alignment with ecological, social and economic sustainability objectives. The following report presents the outcomes of this process¹.

¹ This document is a report in line with the expected deliverables listed in Work Package 3 – Sustainability of the Imagine Peace project: <https://imaginepeaceproject.eu/>.

2. Economic Sustainability



	Guideline	Guideline ID	Relevance Points (RP)	Scoring Points (SP)	Weighted Points (RP*SP)
Management	Selection of Installations	C 1.1.	1	3	3
	Stakeholder Involvement	C 1.2.	3	4	12
	Financial Planning	C 1.3.	4	4	16
	Risk Assessment	C 1.4.	3	4	12
	Employee Wellbeing	C 1.5.	4	2	8
	Workforce Management	C 1.6.	3	4	12
	Knowledge Management	C 1.7.	2	4	8
	Total Management				71/80 (88,8%)
Processes	Financial Flows	C 2.1.	4	4	16
	Knowledge Capture	C 2.2.	2	4	8
	Quality Controls	C 2.3.	4	4	16
	Public Relations Strategy	C 2.4.	3	3	9
	Supplier Reliability	C 2.5.	3	4	12
	Dealing with Complaints	C 2.6.	1	4	4
	Total Processes				65/68 (95,6%)
Results	Festival Continuity	C 3.1.	2	4	8
	Economic and Tourism Value	C 3.2.	4	4	16
	Sponsoring	C 3.3.	3	4	12
	Perceived Communication	C 3.4.	3	4	12
	Complaints	C 3.5.	1	2	2
	Total Results				50/52 (96,2%)
	Total				186/200 (93%)

Table 1: Overview of the Economic Sustainability Guidelines

2.1. Assessment Level: Management

2.1.1. Selection of Installations (C 1.1.)

The Water Light Festival applies a curated installation selection process that combines artistic quality, technical feasibility, and financial considerations. For the 2026 edition, three curators were involved in the selection and coordination of artists, ensuring close communication between the festival management and participating creatives.

The audit confirmed that the selected installations were generally realised at a high artistic level and contributed to a coherent programme aligned with the festival's thematic focus. Technical feasibility is assessed through site visits and ongoing exchanges with artists, while production and installation costs are considered throughout the planning process to ensure that projects can be delivered within the available resources. Audit participants noted that the installations were successfully implemented and that communication among the involved actors functioned effectively.

Artist reliability is supported through the festival's long-standing experience, established professional networks, and the intermediary role of the curators. While this approach has proven effective in practice, reliability is assessed primarily through previous experience and professional relationships rather than through a formalised evaluation procedure. Overall, the selection process reflects a strong balance between artistic ambition, practical feasibility, and responsible resource management.

2.1.2. Stakeholder Involvement (C 1.2.)

The festival involves a wide range of stakeholders in its planning and implementation processes. The audit confirmed the existence of structured cooperation with public authorities and institutions, particularly in relation to permits, safety planning, and operational requirements.

Stakeholder involvement is formalised through established procedures and regular exchanges with key partners, including the municipality and security authorities. In addition, the organizing body represents a broad network of local stakeholders and is supported by a stakeholder board that provides an additional mechanism for stakeholder input.

Overall, stakeholder engagement is integrated into the festival's management processes and includes a broad range of actors whose perspectives and requirements are considered during planning and implementation.

2.1.3. Financial Planning (C 1.3.)

The Water Light Festival applies a structured approach to financial planning and management. Detailed budgets are prepared and regularly monitored throughout the planning and implementation phases, considering different funding sources and expenditure categories.

The audit confirmed that financial planning is closely linked to the festival's operational activities. Revenue streams, including ticket sales and external funding, are considered during budgeting, allowing financial resources to be estimated and allocated in advance. The level of detail applied to financial planning varies according to the requirements of different funding schemes and reporting obligations. Overall, financial management is integrated into the festival's organizational processes and provides a solid basis for the transparent allocation and control of financial resources.

2.1.4. Risk Assessment (C 1.4.)

The festival has a structured approach to deal with risk management. It begins during the planning phase and continues throughout the implementation of the festival. Risk assessments are conducted for individual locations, addressing technical, safety, and environmental aspects. Site inspections are carried out in cooperation with an expert local partner and the relevant authorities, particularly when new festival locations are introduced.

The audit confirmed that technical feasibility is assessed in advance and that potential risks are considered during the selection and preparation of installations. Environmental aspects also integrated into the assessment process, as reflected in the adaptation or relocation of installations when potential impacts on local wildlife were identified.

Liability insurance is in place for the festival, moreover, while participating artists are covered through the festival's insurance arrangements where necessary, they are also required to hold their own liability insurance. Additional security measures, including security personnel and surveillance systems at selected locations, further support the prevention and management of operational risks.

2.1.5. Employee Wellbeing (C 1.5.)

Measures to support organisational continuity and the preservation of institutional knowledge are present. The audit highlighted the existence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities, as well as structured documentation to support festival planning and implementation.

In particular, the recently introduced management system includes checklists, manuals, and operational guidelines that facilitate knowledge transfer within the organisation and provide support for future team members. Audit participants also noted that several staff members return regularly, supporting continuity and the development of institutional knowledge.

While these measures provide a solid basis for preserving organizational knowledge, the assessment identified opportunities to further strengthen long-term staff retention through more formalised retention and workforce development strategies.

2.1.6. Workforce Management (C 1.6.)

The Water Light Festival has a structured workforce management approach that reflects the recurring nature of the event and the experience of the organizing team. Staffing is planned in advance, allowing resources to be allocated across the different phases of festival preparation and implementation.

The audit confirmed that the festival was delivered without significant personnel shortages. Working schedules are adapted to the operational needs of the event, particularly during the festival period, and external staff are employed where additional support is required. Despite the relatively small size of the core team, responsibilities were allocated effectively and the operational workload remained manageable throughout the event.

Overall, workforce management resulted adequate for the successful planning and delivery of the festival.

2.1.7. Knowledge Management (C 1.7.)

A structured knowledge management system supports the documentation, storage, and transfer of organizational knowledge throughout the festival. A dedicated project management platform is used to record processes, planning documents, operational information, and lessons learned from previous editions.

The audit confirmed that knowledge is systematically collected and maintained by team members, making relevant information accessible across the organization. The system supports continuity between festival editions and facilitates the integration and training of new staff by providing access to documented procedures and organizational experience.

Overall, knowledge management is embedded within the festival's organizational processes and contributes to the retention and accessibility of institutional knowledge.

2.2. Assessment Level: Processes

2.2.1. Financial Flows (C 2.1.)

The Water Light Festival maintains a systematic approach to documenting financial flows. The audit confirmed that revenues and expenditures are recorded and monitored through established financial management procedures.

Financial documentation covers the main income and expenditure categories associated with the festival, including ticket sales, funding and sponsorship contributions, payments to artists and service providers, and other operational costs. This provides a transparent overview of financial transactions and supports financial control and reporting activities.

Overall, the festival has established procedures that ensure financial flows are comprehensively documented and traceable.

2.2.2. Knowledge Capture (C 2.2.)

Knowledge capture is systematically applied throughout the different phases of festival planning and implementation. Information is collected before, during, and after the event through regular meetings, ongoing communication among team members and partners, and the documentation of operational and technical experiences.

The audit confirmed that knowledge is recorded within the festival's project management system, where team members contribute relevant information and updates. Weekly management meetings and dedicated technical exchanges support continuous knowledge sharing and coordination, particularly in the period leading up to the festival.

Post-festival evaluations are conducted with key partners and stakeholders, allowing experiences and lessons learned to be reflected upon and integrated into future planning. This process is supported by dedicated project management structures and contributes to the continuous development of the festival.

2.2.3. Quality Controls (C 2.3.)

The Water Light Festival applies quality control measures during the preparation and implementation of its installations. Given the site-specific nature of many artworks, technical and organisational aspects are reviewed in close collaboration with the participating artists during the planning phase.

The audit confirmed that site visits are conducted prior to the festival to assess installation requirements and identify potential challenges. In addition, all installations are tested prior to the festival opening to address technical issues and ensure that artworks are presented as intended.

These procedures contribute to the consistent delivery of installations and support the overall quality of the festival programme.

2.2.4. Public Relations Strategy (C 2.4.)

The festival follows a structured approach to public relations and communication. Responsibility for communication activities is assigned within the festival team, and communication planning begins months before the event in coordination with festival management.

Communication activities are planned across different stages of the festival and involve regular coordination between the festival management and communication team. Multiple communication channels are used to reach different audiences, while efforts are made to balance communication needs with sustainability considerations, including a limited use of printed materials.

Overall, public relations activities provide a solid basis for promoting the event and informing visitors. Opportunities remain to further strengthen measures that encourage visitors to engage with detailed information about the festival and its installations prior to their visit.

2.2.5. Supplier Reliability (C 2.5.)

The Water Light Festival relies on established relationships with suppliers and service providers that have been developed over multiple editions. The audit confirmed that supplier selection is based not only on cost considerations but also on reliability, experience, and the ability to meet the festival's technical and logistical requirements.

The festival works with a combination of long-standing and newly identified suppliers, reducing dependence on individual providers while maintaining continuity in service delivery. Supplier decisions are informed by market comparisons and previous experience, supporting reliable partnerships and the successful implementation of festival activities.

Overall, supplier management is based on clear communication, established working relationships, and a balanced consideration of quality, reliability, and cost.

2.2.6. Dealing with Complaints (C 2.6.)

Strong emphasis is placed on responding to complaints and visitor feedback. Complaints can be submitted through multiple channels, including direct contact, telephone, and social media, and are reviewed by the festival team with the aim of providing a timely response.

The audit confirmed that complaints are handled as a management priority and escalated when necessary. Front-office staff are briefed on how to handle routine enquiries, while more complex issues are addressed directly by the management team. Feedback received during the festival is used to implement corrective actions where appropriate and to improve communication with visitors.

In addition to responding to complaints, the festival seeks to prevent potential concerns through proactive communication with residents, local businesses, and other stakeholders prior to the event. This approach supports positive relations with the local community and contributes to a low number of complaints during the festival period.

2.3. Assessment Level: Results

2.3.1. Festival Continuity (C 3.1.)

Survey results indicate a positive basis for the long-term continuity of the Water Light Festival. Just over half of respondents (51.5%) reported having attended previous editions, point to a recurring visitor based while also showing that the festival attracts new audiences.

Overall, respondents showed a positive intention to return. Most respondents (55.3%) stated that they would visit the festival again, while only 3.9% indicated that they would not return. A further 40.8% were undecided. Overall, the results suggest that the festival can maintain visitor interest and has favourable prospects for retaining and further developing its audience in future editions.

2.3.2. Economic and Tourism Value (C 3.2.)

Survey results suggest that the Water Light Festival generates a meaningful tourism and economic contribution to the destination. For 38.8% of respondents, the festival represented the main reason for travelling to Brixen/Bressanone. Among those respondents, approximately half reported staying overnight in the destination. These findings suggest that the event supports the destination's attractiveness during the festival period and generates benefits for the local tourism economy.

Visitors' perceptions of the festival's economic and tourism value were moderately positive, with an average rating of 3.8 out of 5. Overall, the results indicate that the festival functions as a relevant tourism attraction and contributes to the destination's visibility and visitor economy.

2.3.3. Sponsoring (C 3.3.)

Sponsorship represents an important component of the festival's funding structure. The audit confirmed that the festival is supported by approximately 40 sponsors, reflecting strong relationships with businesses and organisations from the region and beyond.

The sponsor network provides a significant contribution to the festival's financial resources while also supporting its visibility and connections within the local community. A diverse sponsorship base reduces dependence on individual partners and supports the stability of the festival's funding model.

2.3.4. Perceived Communication (C 3.4.)

Survey results indicate that communication is both important to visitors and generally perceived positively. Respondents reported a high level of satisfaction with the festival's communication activities, with an average rating of 4.1 on a five-point scale.

At the same time, communication was considered relevant for the festival experience, receiving an average importance rating of 3.9. This suggests that visitors value access to information before and during the event and that the communication measures implemented by the festival generally meet their expectations.

Overall, the results indicate a good alignment between the importance visitors attribute to communication and their satisfaction with the information provided by the festival.

2.3.5. Complaints (C 3.5.)

A generally positive perception of how visitor feedback and complaints are handled emerges from the survey. Respondents rated the consideration given to feedback and complaints at an average of 3.8 on a five-point scale, indicating that visitors generally feel their concerns are acknowledged.

At the same time, some visitors made use of available communication channels to express their views and experiences.

Overall, the findings suggest that complaint and feedback management is positively perceived by visitors, while still offering opportunities to further strengthen the visibility and effectiveness of feedback processes.

3. Social Sustainability



	Guideline	Guideline ID	Relevance Points (RP)	Scoring Points (SP)	Weighted Points (RP*SP)
Management	Selection of Installations	S 1.1.	2	4	8
	Collaboration with Schools and Associations	S 1.2.	3	2	6
	Social Inclusion	S 1.3.	4	2	8
	Family Concept	S 1.4.	1	4	4
	Conflict Management (Residents)	S 1.5.	4	3	12
	Gender Concept	S 1.6.	3	4	12
	Employee Training	S 1.7.	3	4	12
	Total Management				62/80 (77,5%)
Processes	Noise Reduction	S 2.1.	3	4	12
	Light Pollution	S 2.2.	3	4	12
	Accessible Communication	S 2.3.	4	4	16
	Safety Measures	S 2.4.	4	3	12
	Active Participation	S 2.5.	2	4	8
	Parking	S 2.6.	1	3	3
	Total Processes				63/68 (92,6%)
Results	Light and Noise Disturbance	S 3.1.	3	2	6
	Traffic Disturbance	S 3.2.	2	2	4
	Cross-Generational Inclusiveness	S 3.3.	1	2	2
	Participants with Disabilities	S 3.4.	3	2	6
	Consideration of Local Needs	S 3.5.	4	3	12
	Total Results				30/52 (57,7%)
	Total				155/200 (77,5%)

Table 2: Overview of the Social Sustainability Guidelines

3.1. Assessment Level: Management

3.1.1. Selection of Installations (S 1.1.)

The Water Light Festival considers social aspects as part of its curatorial approach and programme development. The 2026 edition featured participatory elements that encouraged visitor engagement, including activities specifically designed for younger audiences.

The audit confirmed a balanced representation of artists in terms of gender, as well as the involvement of both local and international artists. This combination supports the festival's connection to the local cultural context while also bringing diverse artistic perspectives to the programme.

The festival further promotes cultural exchange through collaborations with international artists and partner organisations. Participation in the Imagine Peace project provided additional opportunities for exchange and cooperation at the European level, contributing to the festival's social and cultural objectives.

3.1.2. Collaborations with Schools and Associations (S 1.2.)

The festival engages with local organisations and community actors to strengthen local participation and create opportunities for involvement beyond the festival's core programme. The audit confirmed the involvement of local stakeholders and associations in the implementation of the event.

Particular attention was given to younger audiences through initiatives such as the Kids Light Lab, which provided opportunities for children to actively engage with the festival. While collaboration with schools was more limited during the 2026 edition due to external circumstances, the festival has sought to involve educational institutions in previous editions and continues to recognise their potential role in community engagement.

Overall, the festival demonstrates a commitment to involving local actors and creating opportunities for participation, particularly for younger members of the community.

3.1.3. Social Inclusion (S 1.3.)

Accessibility is considered through the selection of locations and the use of public spaces that are generally accessible to a broad range of visitors. The audit confirmed that the festival implemented measures to facilitate orientation and participation, including a blue illuminated line guiding visitors through the city and the organization of guided tours.

These measures contributed to making the festival accessible and easier to navigate for many visitors.

At the same time, the assessment identified opportunities to further strengthen inclusion through measures specifically addressing a wider range of disabilities, including visual and hearing impairments.

Overall, the festival provides a generally accessible visitor experience while offering potential for further development in inclusive design and communication.

3.1.4. Family Concept (S 1.4.)

The Water Light Festival includes measures to make the programme accessible and appealing to families with children. Dedicated activities for younger audiences were organized, including the Kids Light Lab, which provided opportunities for children to actively engage with the festival.

In addition, some installations and activities were scheduled earlier in the day or in the evening, enabling families with younger children to participate before the main evening programme. These measures helped broaden access to the festival across different age groups and supported a family-friendly visitor experience.

Overall, the festival demonstrates a conscious effort to accommodate families and create opportunities for children to engage with light art and related activities.

3.1.5. Conflict Management (Residents) (S 1.5.)

A structured approach to managing relations with residents and addressing potential conflicts is applied. Communication with residents begins prior to the festival through targeted information campaigns, including direct communication with people living in areas where festival activities take place, who are informed in due time with letters.

The audit confirmed that responsibilities for handling enquiries and complaints are clearly assigned within the festival organisation. Public feedback is managed through several channels, including social media and front-office services, allowing concerns to be addressed in a timely manner. In addition, the largely free accessibility of the festival and the availability of benefits for residents contribute to maintaining positive relations with the local community.

Overall, the festival demonstrates a proactive approach to resident communication and conflict management, helping to prevent and address potential concerns associated with the event.

3.1.6. Gender Concept (S 1.6.)

The Water Light Festival places a strong emphasis on gender equality and inclusivity in its programme and organisational structures. The audit confirmed that gender balance is considered during the selection of artists, resulting in a nearly equal representation of genders among participating artists in the 2026 edition.

Gender diversity was also reflected in other areas of the festival organization, including the curatorial team. While representation varies across professional roles and reflects broader patterns within the cultural and technical sectors, the festival actively supports the principles of equality and inclusion through its organizational approach and public commitment to these values.

Overall, gender considerations are integrated into festival planning and contribute to a balanced and inclusive cultural programme.

3.1.7. Employee Training (S 1.7.)

Training and information activities to support staff and collaborators in their respective roles is provided. The audit confirmed that briefings are organized to prepare team members and helpers for festival operations and to ensure a common understanding of responsibilities and procedures. In addition to internal training activities, the festival benefits from exchanges with other event organizers and participation in professional networks. Through initiatives such as the Imagine Peace project and visits to other festivals, team members have opportunities to learn from different approaches, share experiences, and identify good practices that can be applied within the festival context.

Overall, staff development combines operational preparation with opportunities for broader knowledge exchange and professional learning.

3.2. Assessment Level: Processes

3.2.1. Noise Reduction (S 2.1.)

The Water Light Festival considers noise impacts during the planning and implementation of installations. Noise levels are managed in accordance with local regulations and installations with the potential to generate higher noise levels are identified in advance.

Communication with residents forms part of this approach, particularly in locations where sound-producing installations are planned. Feedback from residents and other stakeholders is considered, and adjustments are made where necessary. In addition, silent installations are preferred in more sensitive locations to reduce potential disturbances.

Overall, the festival combines technical, organisational, and communication measures to minimise noise impacts and maintain positive relations with the local community.

3.2.2. Light Pollution (S 2.2.)

Potential light pollution effects are considered during the planning and implementation of installations with potential impacts assessed in advance and efforts made to avoid lighting solutions that could cause unnecessary disturbance to residents or surrounding areas.

Communication with residents forms part of this approach as well, allowing potentially affected groups to be informed about festival activities in advance. Flexibility is maintained during implementation, with adjustments made to installations where necessary in response to emerging issues or changing circumstances.

Overall, the festival combines preventive planning, communication, and adaptive management measures to minimise light pollution and support positive relations with residents.

3.2.3. Accessible Communication (S 2.3.)

The festival has implemented measures to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of its communication. Efforts are made to use inclusive language in festival communications, with attention to gender-sensitive communication and the inclusion of different local linguistic groups.

Accessibility considerations have also been integrated into digital communication channels. Prior to the festival, awareness-raising activities were organized within the team, while the festival website was reviewed and improved with accessibility aspects in mind.

At the same time, the audit identified further opportunities for development, particularly regarding communication formats that support people with visual or other impairments. Overall, accessible communication is recognized as an important area of action and is increasingly integrated into the festival's communication strategy.

3.2.4. Safety Measures (S 2.4.)

The Water Light Festival implements a range of safety measures to support the secure operation of the event. The audit confirmed that detailed risk assessments are carried out in cooperation with local partners and that relevant authorities, including police, fire brigade, and emergency services, are involved in the planning process

Technical checks are conducted prior to the festival, while security personnel and surveillance systems are deployed where considered appropriate. Safety planning is supported by formal procedures and regulatory requirements, particularly for installations located in public spaces.

Overall, the festival demonstrates a structured approach to safety management based on risk assessment, coordination with public authorities, and the implementation of preventive measures throughout the event.

3.2.5. Active Participation (S 2.5.)

Several opportunities for visitors to actively participate in the festival experience are provided and the audit confirmed the presence of interactive installations that encouraged direct engagement, including artworks that invited visitors to contribute their own thoughts and reflections.

Participation was further supported through activities such as the Kids Light Lab and additional workshop formats, which offered opportunities for hands-on involvement and creative interaction. These activities complemented the exhibition programme and enabled different audience groups to engage with the festival beyond passive observation.

Overall, active participation forms an important component of the festival programme and contributes to visitor engagement and community involvement.

3.2.6. Parking (S 2.6.)

The festival relies primarily on the existing parking infrastructure of the city. Information on how to reach the festival is provided through festival communication channels, while available parking facilities are indicated on festival maps to assist visitors travelling by car.

At the same time, the festival encourages the use of more sustainable modes of transport, particularly public transportation and walking. This approach is supported by the compact urban setting of Brixen/Bressanone, where most festival locations can be reached on foot. Additional efforts are made to improve public transport availability during festival hours.

Overall, the festival makes effective use of existing mobility infrastructure while promoting alternatives to private car use.

3.3. Assessment Level: Results

3.3.1. Light and Noise Disturbance (S 3.1.)

Survey results indicate that the festival generates a moderate level of additional disturbance in terms of both light and noise. Respondents rated the perceived increase in light pollution at 2.6 and the perceived increase in noise at 2.6 on a 5-point Likert scale.

These findings suggest that festival activities create some impacts compared to normal conditions, but that disturbance levels remain relatively limited.

3.3.2. Traffic Disturbance (S 3.2.)

According to the survey results, the festival generates some additional traffic compared to normal conditions, although perceived impacts remain relatively limited. Respondents rated the increase in traffic at an average of 2.2 on a 5-point Likert scale.

At the same time, satisfaction with parking arrangements was generally positive, with an average rating of 3.9. This indicates that visitors were largely satisfied with the availability and organization of parking facilities despite the additional mobility demand generated by the festival.

3.3.3. Cross-Generational Inclusiveness (S 3.3.)

Survey results indicate a moderate level of participation by younger and older age groups. In total, 15.1% of respondents belonged to either younger or older age categories, suggesting that the festival attracts visitors from a range of generations while predominantly attended by adults of working age. The festival also implemented initiatives aimed at younger audiences that provided opportunities for children and families to engage actively with the festival programme and contributed to a more inclusive visitor experience.

Overall, the results demonstrate efforts to engage younger audiences, while highlighting potential opportunities to further increase the involvement of both younger and older age groups.

3.3.4. Participants with Disabilities (S 3.4.)

Survey results indicate a generally positive perception of the festival's accessibility and inclusiveness for people with disabilities. Respondents rated the accessibility of installations at an average of 3.9 and the inclusiveness of people with disabilities at 3.6 on a 5-point Likert scale.

These findings suggest that visitors perceive the festival as reasonably accessible and inclusive, while also indicating that there is room for further improvement. In particular, additional measures addressing different types of disabilities and accessibility needs could further enhance participation and inclusiveness in future editions.

3.3.5. Consideration of Local Needs (S 3.5.)

Survey results indicate that the festival is generally perceived as taking local needs into account. Respondents rated the consideration of local interests at an average of 3.9 on a 5-point Likert scale, suggesting a largely positive assessment of the festival's relationship with the local community. At the same time, the perceived level of disturbance caused to residents was relatively moderate, with an average rating of 2.6. This indicates that while the festival generates some impacts on the surrounding community, these are generally considered manageable. Overall, the findings suggest that the festival succeeds in balancing its activities with the interests of residents, although there remains potential to further strengthen the perceived consideration of local needs.

4. Ecological Sustainability



	Guideline	Guideline ID	Relevance Points (RP)	Scoring Points (SP)	Weighted Points (RP*SP)
Management	Selection of Installations	E 1.1.	4	3	12
	Environment Management	E 1.2.	4	4	16
	Waste Prevention	E 1.3.	2	2	4
	Energy Saving Plan	E 1.4.	3	3	9
	Cooperation with Environmental Organizations	E 1.5.	3	4	12
	Life Cycle Assessment	E 1.6.	1	2	2
	Environmental Awareness	E 1.7.	3	3	9
	Total Management				
Processes	Energy Saving Measures	E 2.1.	4	2	8
	Wildlife Impact Measures	E 2.2.	2	4	8
	Public Transportation Support Measures	E 2.3.	1	4	4
	Environmentally Sustainable Printing	E 2.4.	3	4	12
	Environmentally Sustainable Resources	E 2.5.	3	4	12
	Technical Quality Controls	E 2.6.	4	2	8
	Total Processes				
Results	Energy Consumption	E 3.1.	3	3	9
	Energy Savings	E 3.2.	3	2	6
	Energy from Renewable Sources	E 3.3.	4	4	16
	Waste Generation	E 3.4.	1	4	4
	Sustainable Transportation	E 3.5.	2	4	8
	Total Results				
Total					159/200 (79,5%)

Table 3: Overview of the Ecological Sustainability Guidelines

4.1. Assessment Level: Management

4.1.1. Selection of Installations (E 1.1.)

The Water Light Festival considers ecological aspects during the selection of installations. The audit confirmed the use of artworks incorporating reused or repurposed materials, as well as installations developed from materials available on site. In addition, rented equipment is widely used, contributing to a more resource-efficient approach.

The festival also supports the circulation of artworks, with several installations being presented at multiple festivals. Electricity used for the festival is sourced from a renewable energy provider, further supporting the festival's environmental objectives.

At the same time, ecological criteria are not yet systematically integrated across all aspects of the selection process. In particular, the assessment identified opportunities to place greater emphasis on the evaluation of energy requirements and the explicit consideration of sustainability frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals during project selection.

Overall, environmental considerations are present within the installation selection process, while further formalisation of ecological criteria could strengthen their role in future editions.

4.1.2. Environmental Management (E 1.2.)

Environmental considerations are integrated into the planning and assessment of installations. Potential impacts on wildlife and sensitive environments are reviewed prior to implementation, including consultations with biologists and environmental experts where appropriate.

Environmental considerations matter when selecting locations and installations. Previous experiences have informed current practices, and installations have been adapted, relocated, or not implemented where potential impacts on the surrounding environment were identified. Specific environmental assessments have also been conducted for installations with potentially sensitive lighting characteristics. Overall, environmental management is embedded within the festival's planning processes through consultation, review procedures, and preventive measures, contributing to the reduction of environmental impacts associated with the event.

4.1.3. Waste Prevention (E 1.3.)

The festival implements several measures aimed at preventing unnecessary waste generation. The audit confirmed efforts to reduce the use of printed materials, including the introduction of a digital festival map and the limited production of printed information materials.

Additional waste prevention measures include the use of digital ticketing where possible, the avoidance of promotional gadgets, and the reuse of festival infrastructure and information displays across multiple editions. Due to the nature of the festival, which involves limited sales activities and no extensive food and beverage services, waste generation remains relatively low.

Overall, waste prevention is addressed through practical measures that reduce material consumption and encourage the reuse of existing resources, although these efforts are not currently embedded within a formalized waste prevention plan.

4.1.4. Energy-Saving Plan (E 1.4.)

Different measures aimed at reducing energy consumption and improving energy efficiency are adopted. The audit confirmed that electricity for the festival is sourced from a renewable energy provider and that efforts are made to reduce unnecessary lighting during the festival period. Moreover, LED lights are used instead of halogen, contributing to lower energy consumption and a reduced environmental impact.

In cooperation with local stakeholders, city lighting is partially reduced, and businesses are encouraged to limit their lighting, supported by the provision of reusable alternatives. These measures contribute to reducing overall energy consumption while maintaining the festival experience.

Overall, energy-saving actions are integrated into festival operations but further opportunities exist to better assess energy requirements and develop a more comprehensive energy management approach.

4.1.5. Cooperation with Environmental Organisations (E 1.5.)

The festival cooperates with environmental organisations as part of its planning and sustainability efforts. Environmental stakeholders are consulted prior to the festival and their expertise is considered when assessing potential environmental impacts and planning festival activities.

Input from environmental organizations is incorporated into decision-making processes, particularly when evaluating installations and locations that may affect sensitive natural environments.

Overall, cooperation with environmental organisations is an integral part of the festival's environmental management approach and helps ensure that ecological aspects are taken into account in planning.

4.1.6. Life Cycle Assessment (E 1.6.)

The Water Light Festival considers certain life cycle aspects when planning and implementing the festival. The audit highlighted the use of locally sourced and rented technical equipment, which helps reduce the need for additional material production and long-distance transport of equipment.

In addition, several artworks are reused and presented at multiple festivals, extending their useful life beyond a single event. These practices help reduce the environmental impacts associated with the production and transport of installations.

Overall, the festival takes selected life cycle aspects into account, particularly regarding equipment use and the circulation of artworks, although a comprehensive life cycle assessment is not currently conducted.

4.1.7. Environmental Awareness (E 1.7.)

Environmental awareness is promoted through both the artistic programme and the communication activities of the festival. Environmental themes, particularly those related to water, sustainability, and climate change, are regularly addressed through installations and accompanying initiatives. During the 2026 edition, additional activities linked to World Water Day and the broader sustainability objectives of the festival supported these efforts.

Environmental awareness is also supported through cooperation with local stakeholders and businesses. For example, local shops were encouraged to reduce lighting during the festival period, supported by a campaign implemented in collaboration with City Marketing Brixen. The festival further communicates its environmental measures as part of its participation in the regional Green Event certification scheme. Overall, environmental awareness is an important component of the festival's identity and is promoted through a combination of artistic content, partnerships, and communication activities. While this edition focused on the theme "Imagine Peace", environmental awareness remains a core component of the Water Light Festival.

4.2. Assessment Level: Processes

4.2.1. Energy-Saving Measures (E 2.1.)

The Water Light Festival implements several measures aimed at reducing energy consumption and promoting more sustainable energy use. The audit confirmed that electricity is sourced from a renewable energy provider and that compensation measures are applied through the temporary reduction of other public lighting during the festival period.

Energy-saving practices are also promoted among local stakeholders. In particular, local businesses are encouraged to reduce lighting during festival hours.

Overall, the festival has adopted several practical energy-saving measures. At the same time, opportunities remain to further strengthen the systematic optimisation of installation energy efficiency and the implementation of innovative solutions aimed at balancing energy consumption with the future growth of the festival.

4.2.2. Wildlife Impact Measures (E 2.2.)

Potential impacts on wildlife are considered during the planning and assessment of installations. The audit confirmed that environmental aspects are assessed in advance and that installations are reviewed in terms of their location and potential effects on surrounding ecosystems.

Particular attention is given to installations in environmentally sensitive areas, where additional assessments and consultations may be required. Environmental organisations and experts are involved in the planning process, and installations are adapted, relocated, or not implemented when potential impacts on wildlife or habitats are identified.

Overall, wildlife protection is integrated into festival planning through preventive assessments, consultation processes, and location-specific measures aimed at minimizing ecological disturbance.

4.2.3. Public Transportation Support Measures (E 2.3.)

The Water Light Festival promotes the use of public transportation as part of its mobility strategy. The audit confirmed that information on public transport options is actively communicated to visitors and is given greater prominence than information related to private car travel.

The festival cooperates with local transport providers to improve accessibility during the event period.

For the 2026 edition, the operating hours of a local bus service were extended throughout the festival, while discussions were also held regarding the possibility of extending rail services during evening hours.

Overall, the festival combines communication measures with practical improvements to public transport availability, supporting more sustainable travel options for visitors.

4.2.4. Environmentally Sustainable Printing (E 2.4.)

The festival seeks to minimize the use of printed materials and increasingly relies on digital communication tools. The audit confirmed such efforts, like the creation of digital maps to reduce the overall number of printed brochures.

Where printing remains necessary, environmental aspects are considered when selecting suppliers and materials. Preference is given to printing companies offering more environmentally sustainable paper options.

Overall, the festival combines a digital-first communication approach with environmentally conscious printing practices, contributing to the reduction of material consumption and waste generation.

4.2.5. Environmentally Sustainable Resources (E 2.5.)

Emphasis is placed on the efficient use and reuse of resources. Artworks, technical equipment, and festival infrastructure are reused whenever possible, supporting a more resource-efficient approach and reducing the need for new materials.

Resource use is further optimised through local sourcing and short transport distances. Given the compact urban setting of the festival, many operational activities are carried out on foot or by bicycle, including the transport of smaller materials during the event. Decorative elements are used sparingly, helping to limit unnecessary resource consumption.

Overall, the festival demonstrates commitment to resource efficiency and circular economy principles through the reuse of materials, the minimisation of decorative elements, and the reduction of transport-related impacts.

4.2.6. Technical Quality Controls (E 2.6.)

The festival conducts technical checks to ensure that installations operate as intended and that equipment is used efficiently during the festival. The audit confirmed that technical issues identified during testing or operation are addressed and, where necessary, adjustments are made to reduce unwanted environmental impacts.

Technical reviews are carried out in collaboration with artists and technical staff prior to the opening of the festival. These checks help identify malfunctions or operational issues that could lead to unnecessary resource consumption or disturbances.

Overall, technical quality controls contribute to the efficient operation of installations, although the assessment identified opportunities to further formalize and expand these procedures from an environmental management perspective.

4.3. Assessment Level: Results

4.3.1. Energy Consumption (E 3.1.)

Energy consumption was monitored for the installations presented at the Water Light Festival. The results indicate a relatively low level of energy use in relation to the number of installations, on average between 3 and 12 kW per installation, reflecting the predominance of energy-efficient lighting technologies and the careful management of technical equipment throughout the festival.

Overall, the findings suggest that energy consumption was kept within a moderate range while maintaining the artistic and technical quality of the programme.

4.3.2. Energy Savings (E 3.2.)

Survey results indicate a moderately positive perception of the festival's energy performance and ecological sustainability. Respondents rated the perceived additional energy consumption of the installations at 3.25 on a 5-point Likert scale, suggesting that energy use was noticeable for a proportion of visitors. At the same time, the perceived ecological sustainability of the installations received an average rating of 3.7, indicating that visitors generally associated the festival with environmentally responsible practices and sustainability efforts.

Overall, the results point to a favourable perception of the ecological performance of the festival, while also highlighting the potential to strengthen the visibility of the environmental sustainability of the installations.

4.3.3. Energy from Renewable Sources² (E 3.3.)

The festival sources its electricity from a renewable energy provider, ensuring that all energy used for its operations comes entirely from renewable sources.

By prioritising renewable energy, the festival demonstrates a commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions linked to its energy consumption.

4.3.4. Waste Generation (E 3.4.)

Survey results indicate that the festival generates only limited additional waste and has little perceived impact on the cleanliness of the city. Respondents rated additional waste generation at 2.02 and the negative effects on city cleanliness at 1.7 on a 5-point Likert scale.

These findings suggest that waste generated during the festival remains relatively low and that existing waste management and cleaning measures are generally effective in maintaining the quality of public spaces. The results are also consistent with the festival's efforts to limit material consumption and reduce unnecessary waste.

4.3.5. Sustainable Transportation (E 3.5.)

Survey results indicate a high level of use of sustainable transport modes among festival participants.

Overall, 61.1% of respondents reported reaching the festival by public transportation, walking, or cycling, demonstrating the importance of sustainable mobility within the festival context.

Satisfaction with public transportation was also very positive, receiving an average rating of 4.31 on a 5-point Likert scale. This suggests that public transport options were perceived as accessible and effective in supporting travel to and from the festival.

² Renewable energy sources, also called renewables, are energy sources that replenish (or renew) themselves naturally. Typical examples are solar energy, wind and biomass ([Eurostat, 2025](#)).

5. Conclusion

This sustainability audit of the Water Light Festival provides a comprehensive overview of the festival's performance across the economic, social, and ecological dimensions of sustainability. Overall, the findings highlight a well-established and professionally managed festival that benefits from strong local support, effective organisational structures, and a clear commitment to sustainability. At the same time, the audit identifies some areas where existing practices could be further formalised and strategically developed to strengthen long-term sustainability performance.

From an economic perspective, the festival demonstrates a solid organisational and financial foundation. Structured planning processes, comprehensive financial management, strong stakeholder involvement, and an extensive sponsorship network contribute positively to the festival's economic sustainability. The audit further highlighted effective risk management, established supplier relationships, and a growing knowledge management system that supports organizational continuity. Survey results indicate positive prospects for future visitor retention and confirm the festival's role in shaping the destination's image. Areas for further development relate primarily to the continued formalization of staff retention practices, public relations activities, and the integration of sustainability criteria into operational decision-making processes.

In terms of social sustainability, the festival performs strongly in fostering inclusion, participation, and community engagement. The programme combines local and international artistic contributions, supports cultural exchange, and includes activities designed for children and families. The festival maintains positive relationships with local stakeholders and residents through proactive communication and responsive management practices. Survey results further indicate positive perceptions regarding accessibility, inclusiveness, communication, and consideration of local needs. At the same time, there is still scope to further strengthen accessibility measures for people with different types of disabilities, expand cooperation with schools and youth groups, and increase the participation of underrepresented age groups.

Ecologically, the festival demonstrates a high level of awareness of environmental sustainability and has implemented a wide range of practical measures. These include the use of renewable electricity, efforts to reduce printed materials and waste generation, the promotion of sustainable mobility, cooperation with environmental organizations, and the consideration of wildlife impacts during festival planning. Environmental themes are also reflected in the festival's artistic programme and communication activities. Nevertheless, many environmental actions are currently implemented through established practice and experience rather than through formalised management systems. Further progress could therefore be achieved through more systematic approaches to environmental planning, energy management, and a stronger integration of ecological criteria into the installation selection process.

Overall, the audit confirms that the Water Light Festival has successfully integrated sustainability considerations into many aspects of its planning and implementation. Its principal strengths lie in stakeholder cooperation, financial stability, community engagement, environmental awareness, and the ability to translate sustainability objectives into practical actions. Future progress will depend largely on formalising and documenting many of the practices that are already in place to enhance preparedness in case of unforeseen events. By building on its existing experience and strengthening strategic management approaches, the festival can further enhance its resilience and sustainability performance across all three dimensions.