

Iarnród Éireann Driving Sustainability Through the Supply Chain Sustainability School

In a sector traditionally defined by infrastructure and engineering, Iarnród Éireann, has emerged as a transformative force, not just in transport but in sustainability leadership. As a founding partner of the Supply Chain Sustainability School (SCSS) in Ireland, Iarnród Éireann has pioneered a ripple effect of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) improvement across its supplier base, embedding sustainability into the very rails of Irish industry.

Strategic Leadership at the Heart of the SCSS

Leading from day one, Iarnród Éireann is not just a participant in the SCSS, it is a Gold Level Member, with its Deputy Chief Procurement Officer (DCPO) sitting on the School's Board of Management and two additional staff members contributing to the Leadership Group. This governance involvement ensures that sustainability isn't treated as a checklist item but rather integrated into procurement decision-making at every level.

The numbers alone are compelling, as of November 2025

- **Almost 200 Iarnród Éireann suppliers** have created SCSS accounts.

Just under 300 Iarnród Éireann staff are engaging with SCSS resources.

- In the School's **first year (2024)**:
 - **200 attendees from more than 100 Iarnród Éireann suppliers** participated in SCSS training.
 - **Over 300 supplier staff completed e-learning modules.**
- These figures have grown significantly in 2025, reflecting increasing momentum.

Iarnród Éireann's influence isn't symbolic, it's structural. By bringing its suppliers into the SCSS fold, the organisation is effectively reshaping its supply chain's operational DNA, aligning environmental responsibility with commercial resilience.

Data-Driven Accountability: Carbon Transparency in the Supply Chain

Iarnród Éireann's impact isn't just qualitative — it's measurable. Through its engagement with SCSS and parallel supplier development initiatives, the organisation is driving carbon data transparency at scale:

- **113 suppliers are now submitting some form of carbon data.**
- **57 suppliers** submitted data for 2023.
- **100 suppliers have already submitted their 2024 carbon footprint** — a number that is still rising.
- Critically, these suppliers represent **64.13% of the total value of Iarnród Éireann's purchase orders** in 2024.

While the data has not yet undergone full verification and some gaps remain, the current level of coverage still provides Iarnród Éireann with a valuable early insight into its Scope 3 emissions. This positions the organisation ahead of the curve for both the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), while also



strengthening its ability to support suppliers in meeting their own emerging obligations under these frameworks.

Redefining the Role of a Buyer

The real genius of Iarnród Éireann's strategy lies in how it redefines the traditional buyer-supplier relationship. No longer is procurement solely about cost, delivery, and compliance. Today, it is about partnership, co-development, and shared ESG ambitions. By engaging suppliers early, investing in their capability, and creating structures that encourage continuous improvement, Iarnród Éireann is fostering a supply chain where value is created collaboratively rather than transacted. This shift not only elevates performance but builds a more resilient, future-focused network of suppliers equipped to meet the sustainability challenges ahead.

What's Next? A Culture of Continuous Improvement

With the SCSS ecosystem now firmly embedded in Iarnród Éireann's supplier engagement strategy, the next phase focuses on scaling its impact and strengthening long-term value. Engagement is no longer about meeting a requirement — it is becoming a shared commitment to raising standards across the entire supply chain.

Suppliers are not simply maintaining their involvement; they are deepening it. Many have already expressed their intention to remain closely aligned with the SCSS, recognising its growing importance not only as a high-quality training platform but as a strategic enabler of better business, improved sustainability performance, and stronger commercial resilience.

As participation continues to grow, Iarnród Éireann is positioning the SCSS ecosystem as a catalyst for ongoing improvement — embedding learning, encouraging innovation, and supporting suppliers to deliver greater social and environmental impact year after year.

Conclusion: Procurement with Purpose

At a time when ESG ambitions often stall at the supply chain gate, Iarnród Éireann has proven that meaningful change is possible, and scalable. Through its leadership in the Supply Chain Sustainability School, Iarnród Éireann has empowered suppliers to raise their game, driven transparency through carbon reporting, and redefined what excellence looks like in public procurement.

It's a model that shows how a national railway can quietly become a national sustainability engine.

Supplier Testimonials

All About Trees: Branching into the Future

A specialist in tree surgery and biomass production, All About Trees already had sustainability goals in place, but their engagement with the SCSS marked a new chapter.

“Engagement with the school has given us the opportunity to evolve our sustainability strategy in line with best practice,” the company noted. *“We are now better resourced to support Irish Rail’s sustainability goals through better reporting, staff development, and sustainable service delivery.”*



Through SCSS learning pathways, their staff earned **bronze accreditation** with the school. More importantly, the company now uses SCSS resources to inform its ISO reporting and client communications, giving it an edge in competitive tenders.

“Iarnród Éireann has always shared knowledge and provided a platform for us to develop our businesses in line with market requirements,” said All About Trees. “This initiative has strengthened our relationship, and our operational output now supports their long-term sustainability ambitions.”

Enfonic: Sounding Out a Sustainable Strategy

As a boutique consultancy, Enfonic initially had no formal sustainability strategy. That changed in 2024 after joining the SCSS under Iarnród Éireann’s guidance.

“We were able to set a strong foundation by establishing sustainability and FIR policies, calculating our carbon footprint, and expanding our knowledge,” said the team. “This helped us win one of our largest projects — directly tied to the strength of our sustainability credentials.”

SCSS resources helped the Enfonic team move from technical specialists to well-rounded sustainability advocates, now confidently discussing carbon accounting, biodiversity, and responsible sourcing with clients and partners.

“It’s reassuring to work with a client who values the environment as much as we do,” echoed Enfonic. “It feels like we’re working together toward the same goal — a better, more sustainable world.”

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