

Camping Vrijhaven, through the CE4RT project, has received coaching from Never Ever Blue, and from Ynova.

Camping Vrijhaven is a campsite in the north of the Netherlands, in the province of Friesland and has been working on sustainability for as long as Karin and Jacob have been the owners (1987). We mainly rent out camping pitches, but also (circularly built) cabins. In addition, we rent out all kinds of boats, windsurfing boards and S.U.P. boards and there is a small beach bar where guests can buy sandwiches, coffee, ice cream, and a small snack and drink during busy weekends and the high season. The campsite is open to guests from April 1st and always closes on September 30th! This buys "hibernation" time for the company in which we can take a good look at our campsite and which way the world is moving. We look at trends and developments, go on a journey of inspiration and look at opportunities for collaboration with other parties. We can develop new products, and we can work on improving our campsite. We are hardly disturbed by the issues of the day in this period!

We are a campsite that likes to innovate and do things differently than most other campsites. In 1994 we were the first campsite in the Netherlands with our own website, however, we never offered Wi-Fi at our campsite. Wi-Fi didn't feel right. Camping is an easy way for people to meet new people. Nowhere else during your holiday time you will get into contact with other people so quickly and easily. And when you're on Wi-Fi, staring at a screen, you don't see the other people. And for other people, you're not really easily approachable. In addition, nowhere will you spend the night as close to nature as at a campsite. But again, when you're on a screen, you don't really get anything of nature! So, two obvious reasons, why we never offered Wi-Fi. Now I have to say, there was certainly a period when people (especially our guests) told us that Wi-Fi, just like electricity, is just part of it. We did have doubts but never succumbed to Wi-Fi. In recent years, we have been praised for not offering Wi-Fi.

We don't have animation, but we do have regular performances by creative minds such as musicians, theatre performances or filmmakers.

We have a recycling centre where guests can dispose of their waste, but we also have a garbage service during busy days where we collect the waste from our guests with a specially designed cart. As a result, guests make a lot less waste! This is probably due to social control.

The property is not closed by a gate, we're not a holiday ghetto, are we? We think a barrier is a sign of distrust. Why would we do business with people we can't trust?

We have a fresh flower hanging in every toilet. As a result, guests take better care of the toilets. And there are many more green, sometimes somewhat unusual things on our campsite, which makes us not only unique but also very sustainable.

Because the campsite has had sustainability as its core value for so long, it has really become a frontrunner within the sector. The site has also had the sustainability label 'Green Key Gold' for years.

The further you are in the process of making your company more sustainable, the more difficult it becomes to be able to take steps in this direction. To do this, you need new insights, knowledge and budget!

Because we were allowed to participate in the CE4RT project, we were able to:



1. Get new inspiration
2. Find new blind spots for us
3. New contacts within our network
4. Looking at this theme of sustainability from new perspectives.

And we desperately needed this! Regenerative means that everything is in balance, that you no longer have a negative impact. But unfortunately, we still have a lot of negative impact! We entice our guests to come to us. To do this, they often had to purchase a lot of camping products. Think of the camping equipment itself as tent, caravan or camper. But also think of things like a camping lamp, air mattresses, gas stove, camping chairs, etc. etc. All of these products have a major impact on our world. And often these are only used for a few weeks (e.g. two weeks a year for 10 years is only 20 weeks in total). Then our guests still have to come to us. The outward and return journey also has a considerable impact on the environment! During their stay here, we still need gas to organize part of the hot water for showering, washing dishes and heating the buildings, despite the heat pipes that provide a much more limited gas need here. We still use electricity here, despite all the economical machines such as washing and tumble drying, all lighting is already LED and connected to sensors.

We try to reduce the impact of our guests, but also to develop our campsite itself in such a way that we ultimately have a positive impact (incl. the footprint of our guests around their stay and travel to us and vice versa). I hope we will be able to achieve this within 10-15 years. Coaching, training, new inspiration and more knowledge about sustainability helps, of course!

## Action plan from coaching by Never Ever Blue

### Lessons learned

1. We believe in 2nd chances. Maybe naïve but most people want to do the right thing, there are only a few assholes. So yes, sometimes you get disappointed.
  - a) *Where could you have given people a second chance?*  
**Think carefully before you "write someone off".**
2. It's very easy to start a war, but very hard to stop.
  - a) *Where are you going to prevent a war?*  
**Think before you get into an argument with someone.**
3. Make agreements with local, sustainable suppliers and make sure you don't have to have any stock yourself. Know daily what their catch of the day is and see if you need it now and immediately think about how? This way you avoid stock, and between supplier and waste!
  - a) *Which local and sustainable suppliers can you make such agreements with?*  
**In the meantime, discussions are already underway with the Streekboer, hopefully from 2025 we will be able to offer our guests that they can order a food package from the regional farmer and pick it up at the reception.**
  - b) *Have you documented everything in such a way that everyone in your company can find it so that they can do their work?*  
**Write clear instructions for all 10 most common tasks, including the things you need for them.**



4. On very limited m<sup>2</sup>, you can grow proteins in a sustainable way, which also contributes to making the water cleaner. Moreover, it is much more efficient/less labor intensive and the good (sustainable) growers have a better living
  - a) *Which proteins can you grow in your area, so that your environment (air/water or soil) becomes cleaner, and the process is more efficient?*  
**This is still very difficult and we will first park it for 2026.**
  
5. Simple local products, tasty in themselves but not really super special. It can be made special by, for example, different, delicious toppings! The fact that you also offer a takeaway option from a small company makes a product super scalable.
  - a) *Which ordinary, local product can you make super tasty with generous additions and you can also scale up enormously by adding the take away option?*  
**Together with the employees of our beach bar, we will look at how we can make our beach bar more noticed by people who are in the area, but not on our campsite. In addition, they will also look at clearly mentioning that takeaway option!**
  
6. Social district walk. Look with different eyes at the environment, street furniture, facades, history.
  - a) What can you let your guests take away from their environment so that they make your company more beautiful?  
**We are working on letting our guests bring their own talent to our campsite, with which they can hopefully strengthen local, young adults from Friesland. Both physically and mentally. This is going to take a long time, we are investigating the possibilities for an EU subsidy for this!**  
*For example, a monument where a visual artist had made a peace sculpture out of all illegal weapons confiscated by Danish police.*
  
  - b) What can a visual artist make from items taken or left behind by your guests, so that a beautiful sculpture can be made, which calls for more beautiful/better behavior to be shown to your new guests?  
**We will also park this for later, because we are still in the middle of developing tiny houses with visual artists and just last summer we purchased a sculpture by a visual artist. (the budget is therefore insufficient at this moment).**
  
7. The use of all available space for a garden with vegetables and herbs and chickens for cleaning up vegetable waste and tasty fresh eggs or a beehive are also worth to look at. Small-scale food, from your own garden or sale of pickled vegetables. Optionally, a roof surface or a greenhouse could be used for this.
  - a) *Which chain can you make as short as possible, in an unusual place?*  
**This idea has also been incorporated into the project that we want to develop with the Frisian Young Adults.**
  
  - b) *Does your interior show what kind of company you are? How can you make optimal use of the empty m<sup>2</sup> on your farm?*



**We can do much more in improving the natural ecosystem at our campsite. We are busy increasing biodiversity. This is not only beautiful for our guests, but also for all the animals and plants!**

- c) *How can you make optimal use of the empty m<sup>2</sup> on your farm?*

**We are looking into the possibility of developing a living room with a kitchen on our campsite. Then it can be used by the guests of our tiny houses, but at the same time it could also serve as a meeting and training room, so that we can also offer more of them.**

8. We searched and found a certification program from a larger hospitality company to get ideas that we could benefit from.

- a) *On which themes does the Nordic Swan assess and which ones have I not yet achieved?*

**We will only investigate this after 2025 because we now also have our hands full with the certification of ECG.**

9. For example, there is a thermostat that can be adjusted both upwards and downwards by the guest.

- a) *Which buttons does your guest have access to adjust?*

**None at this time. We will also park it for a while after 2025**

- b) *To what extent is your used furnishing furniture recyclable?*

**This has become one of the new purchasing criteria from 2025**

- c) *You can monitor monthly how well the waste is separated, how much energy and water has been used and share that with your guests as an incentive. On which indicators do you keep track of your (sustainable) performance and share them with your guests in a good visible location?*

**In the newsletters from 2025 onwards, we will always report how we are doing with regard to electricity and gas consumption, and at the end of the season we will also mention how much waste in KG we have produced.**

10. The Netherlands is doing quite well in terms of sustainability. But we don't share it very well....that is called storytelling. We need to do a better job of saying that we are doing the right thing.

- a) *Which sustainable stories can you immediately develop tomorrow to convey them properly?*

**We immediately started in 2024 to post short videos on every Tuesday (sustainable Tuesday) in which we show what kind of green initiative we put in the spotlight.**

11. Sustainable buildings. Old, ugly or broken buildings are still everywhere. Both in the Netherlands and in Germany, for example (Classic Remise Düsseldorf - converted train depot) or in Denmark (Copenhill conversion of the working power plant into a ski slope and climbing wall) people try to turn old buildings, whether or not still in use, into something that is beautiful and with which people benefit so that the building can continue to exist.



- a) *Which operational parts of your business are essential but not pretty? And how can you make it more beautiful by being able to add activities to it that you really wouldn't otherwise be able to have on your farm?*

**We will also take this up after 2025**

12. Vacant buildings: For example, manned petrol pumps that are made unmanned leave the shops empty.

- a) *Do you still have an empty space that you can share with another company so that you become stronger together?*

**We will also take this up after 2025**

13. Social added value:

- a) *What social added value do you have with your company? And can anyone experience them through stories?*

**This is very important, but also very difficult. On the 14th of November we are going to a training in Rotterdam of [www.impactagency.nl](http://www.impactagency.nl) and hope to be able to determine the next step in this**

14. The core value of your company:

- a) *What is the leading role for your company and do you really show that so that this is clear?*

**Freedom is very important to us, so are creativity and sustainability. You will notice this at our campsite as soon as you arrive. But there is always room for improvement. So we are also going to make this more experienceable on the website and in the newsletters of 2025**

15. The core value of your company: We also had coaching from Ynova. Working towards the certification of the Economy of the common Good. As a result, we have also found a lot of action points that we need to work on! The ECG consists of five chapters, from A to E. Below are the action points that we have found as a result of this coaching for 2025.

## Action plan from the ECG coaching

### Points for improvement in 2025

#### from Part A

- a) Develop renewed, additional purchasing criteria such as new suppliers who can start supplying with the four values (human dignity, solidarity, ecological and transparent & control) of the ECG, and be the first to search within the network of ECG suppliers
- b) Developing text that is inspiring and tells that the campsite is a stage for innovations
- c) Less km. driving the car, less energy consumption, buying less (cleaning products, blue diesel), putting less in the residual waste.

#### from Part B

- d) Develop an implementation plan for our action plan



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- e) Developing an exit plan for our use of fossil fuels.

**from Part C**

- f) Some form of catering for staff, such as a fruit basket (particularly for small businesses, as they cannot be expected to have a canteen)
- g) Create a board in the reception area, on which employees can put their good ideas and improvements, and what role they want to play in taking this idea further

**from Part D**

- h) In the future, we actually want to calculate the impact on the environment of everything. Quite a task, of course. How much CO2 or how much water did the production of this product or the materials used cost? We will take the first steps in this direction in 2025 with the rental of tiny houses.
- i) In addition, last year we started making an inventory of the biodiversity at our campsite, including sampling water quality and soil. This one is done on div. sites. This biodiversity project has lasted for one school year and will be repeated every two years. This way we can better know/learn which life needs to be nurtured or nurtured more and which one is already doing well and which one needs to be tempered slightly. In the winter of 2024, we must summarize the results of these studies, and develop an action plan from them and work on it in 2025, so that a new study can start again in the new school year of 2025-2026!

**from Part E**

As far as the strategic choices of the company are concerned, we don't think we should "bother" our employees to ask them to think along with us. It won't help them to make it a nicer place to work or a better (more sustainable) campsite!

- a. However, it would be a good idea to hold a co-creation session during the quiet winter period with employees who like this, on how we can improve our campsite in terms of sustainability, and in terms of job satisfaction
- b. Adjust the text on our website so that it is immediately clear to the visitor of our website that we are dealing with a (frontrunner) sustainable campsite. Add to this the fact that we are the first campsite in the Netherlands with an ECG certification (and the ECG rating to go with it!) So also add it to our big green agenda!
- c. More development of ECO cycling routes along all kinds of eco companies from the region that are worth visiting. These can therefore always be included in the newsletter that is published.
- d. Developing more Tour de Boer bike tours
- e. Introduction to the Economy for the Common Good training/workshops. This can be for colleagues as well as for guests and interested parties from the region. We want to develop this at the beginning of 2025 so that we can offer it during the "jubilee year" of the Circular Friesland Association
- f. Developing a business retreat in a group setting, as soon as we have a general living and meeting space at the circularly designed tiny houses. (It is not yet clear when this could be available, this depends on financial resources)



- g. Developing a sustainable food package service together with the Streekboer so that our guests can easily order a sustainable food package that they can pick up at the reception. This service will be available for the 2025 season. This is how we help our guests (we make it easier for them) by offering this service, making a healthy and good meal, while our local sustainable farmers get extra income!
- h. There are initial discussions with the company BOXO, so that we can become a collection point for packaging material. In this way we hope to inspire not only our guests, but hopefully also the people from the area for whom it will be easier to hand in the packaging material that can be used multiple times with a deposit! Boxo makes packaging material from discarded big bags, so that a webshop can start using this packaging instead of cardboard. This packaging from Boxo lasts about 500 shipments!

