

Becoming more environmentally sustainable



We're in a climate change emergency. Rising temperatures, caused by carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, are creating more extreme weather events like floods, droughts, storms, and rising sea levels. These threaten our ecosystems, health, lives, homes, facilities and ultimately our ability to do the things we love, like taking part in sport, recreation, and physical activity.

To successfully tackle climate change, we all need to change our behaviours and we need to do it now.



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Across the country, millions of people volunteer, watch and take part in sport, recreation and physical activity every week. They're supported by thousands of organisations and facilities from leisure centres to parks, waterways, pitches and clubhouses. As a collective we've a big part to play, not only by changing the way we do things, but by using our voice to influence change.

Our hints and tips will help you work out how you can become more environmentally sustainable, and what you can do to take action. The journey starts here, and your contribution is vitally important. This guide sets out our top tips and allows you to explore them in more detail.

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Make a commitment to change

Even if you're unsure about what you can do to help, making a commitment to change is the first important step. Ideally, this commitment would start with your leaders and decision makers but often it takes someone with passion, interest, and perseverance to start the conversation and get others on board.

It's important to involve your staff, volunteers, participants and members in these conversations so they understand and share the commitment too. There's lots of training and support available to help people feel comfortable and understand the basics so encourage people to access it as needed.

Once you've made a commitment:

- Communicate it internally and externally.
- Explain what you're doing and why.
- Ensure environmental sustainability is a fundamental part of your decision making and operations.

You can do this by:

- Writing a pledge.
- Developing a policy statement.
- Creating a working group.
- Including sustainability as a standing agenda item in regular meetings.
- Continually checking that sustainability is embedded in your values, culture, attitudes, behaviours, operations, and marketing.



Understand your impact, set targets and share your progress

To act on your commitment, you need to better understand your organisation's impact on climate change. The type of impacts you have will depend on what type of organisation you are and how you operate. Every aspect of what you do, from the activities you run, to the membership cards you use, the kit you buy, suppliers you use and how people travel to your activities, has an impact.

Try to calculate your carbon footprint to see where your biggest impacts are and where you can make the biggest reductions. There are [free tools and templates](#) available that can help you so make use of them if you need to.

Consider what's important to you and prioritise actions that can have the biggest effects. You might also want to identify some smaller, 'quick wins' to build momentum and get you started. Once you've worked out what you can do, set yourselves targets, and tell people about them.

You can do this by:

- Building them into your decision-making processes.
- Regularly monitoring your progress.
- Communicating your progress with staff, volunteers, participants, and partners to show what you're doing, and encourage others to act too.



If you use facilities, make sure they are as efficient and sustainable as possible

If you hire facilities

If you use other people's facilities, you may be able to help contribute to making them more efficient. Ask whoever manages them what they are doing and see if you can help them to become more sustainable.

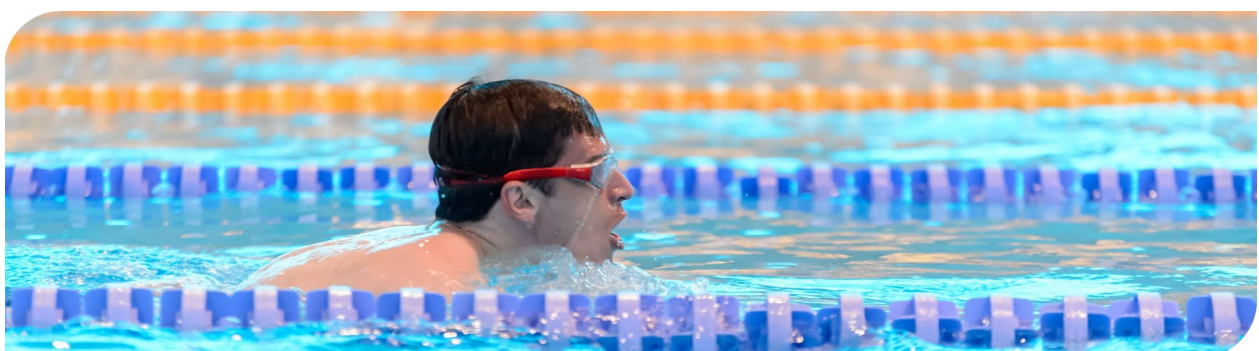
If you have your own facilities

If you manage your own facilities or spaces, there are lots of options you can explore to make them more environmentally sustainable. Think about what you could do to reduce energy consumption, like:

- Monitoring your energy usage by installing energy meters.
- Switching lights and electrical equipment off and/or exploring automatic controls for this.
- Encouraging people to take shorter showers or using aerating shower heads.
- Programming your thermostats and using thermostatic radiator valves.
- Using LED bulbs.
- Improving your insulation.
- Exploring different energy tariffs and providers.
- Moving to providers that use renewable energy sources.
- Recycling greywater or rainwater.
- Using irrigation and sprinkler systems overnight.
- Maintaining or improving your glazing to avoid drafts when it's cold and aid ventilation when it's hot.
- Installing renewable energy sources on site.

This is an evolving market and there are multiple advancements and solutions available. Take time to find the right ones for you. The best solutions aren't always the cheapest so phasing works may be required and one-off fundraising projects can help you cover costs.

Talk to your local Council and other community partners to see what local projects are happening, and whether you can be included in local investments that are made to work towards the national target of net zero.



Support nature and wildlife

It is not only people that are impacted by climate change, nature and wildlife is too. A diverse range of plants, animals and habitats exist within every local community. They play an essential part in producing oxygen, cleaning the air and water, and creating food so it's important that we protect them. Taking action to save this biodiversity can also help to stop the acceleration of climate change and improve our own health and wellbeing. There are lots of different things you can do to help.

If you hire facilities

- Ask the managers what they're doing to support biodiversity in your local area.
- There's usually plenty going on in every community so consider getting involved in local planting or gardening schemes, take your members on wildlife walks, or do a sponsored litter pick to raise awareness and funds!

If you have your own facilities

- Make the most of your natural environment. Think about whether there are unused areas that could be used to support wildlife by leaving the grass to grow longer or planting wildflowers, shrubs, or trees.
- Consider whether grass cutting patterns and equipment could be changed to enhance their impact on the environment and reduce costs.
- See if you can reduce the amount of pesticides, fertilisers and chemicals you use or whether you can switch to organic products.
- Explore on-site composting.
- If you have enough space, you may even want to create an organic garden, you could use or sell what you grow and raise awareness in the process!



Photo by [Steven Weeks](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Manage and reduce waste including single-use plastic

The waste we create never really goes away. If it isn't recycled, it's either buried in a landfill site or burnt and can stay in the environment for years, or even centuries, depending on what it is. Sometimes the energy created by burning waste is used to generate electricity but the smoke and chemicals this creates can end up in the atmosphere and damage the environment.

Reducing the amount of waste you create is vital. Try to make sure your culture and practices treat all resources as valuable and encourage people to repair, recycle or re-use things as much as possible. If you use suppliers to help you do this, make sure you understand their practices too.

It's important to have systems and processes in place to encourage people to stop and reconsider whether they need to buy or use new items, or if they can do without or find an alternative. For example:

- Consider going paperless or digital where you can and think about the other consumables you could reduce too.
- Lots of people or organisations change their sports kit, footwear, and equipment more frequently than they need to. If you can avoid changing things every season, you can help to keep items in circulation for longer.
- Offering rental, return and recycling schemes can be good for this too.
- Donating used kit and equipment can help to prolong its life and can be helpful to others, so see what schemes exist locally that you can tap into.
- Avoid sending things to other countries, unless you know they're needed and can be recycled or disposed of properly.

Reduce plastic waste

Plastic has a significant impact on climate change and the natural world. You can help to eliminate single-use plastics and polystyrene waste by making simple changes like:

- Providing opportunities for people to refill their water bottles.
- Removing single-use items.
- Introducing reusable cutlery, straws, cups, plates and containers.

[This advice from Preventing Plastic Pollution](#) is really helpful.

Recycle

Reduce waste as much as you can and recycle as much as possible, by:

- Having a supply of clearly labelled recycling, composting, and green-waste bins - this is an important way of discouraging a throw away culture.
- Being sure to follow the local rules for recycling in your area.

- Making the most of local services to recycle and reuse electrical and other equipment and furniture too.
- Asking your facility provider what they can do to help facilitate this (if you use other people's facilities).

Think about the food and drinks you offer

Farming, producing food and drinks and transportation all have an impact on the environment and climate change. If you have a catering offer or organise events and activities, there's lots you can do to make them more environmentally sustainable.

Large scale industrial farming

A significant part of all emissions and our impacts on nature come from large-scale industrial farming, driven by the amount of meat and dairy we consume. This also drives land-use change, which can harm nature and accelerate climate change. Consider:

- Providing more plant-based food and dairy alternatives.
- Offering smaller portion sizes of higher quality, locally sourced, meat.
- Asking people if they'd be supportive of some meat free days.

Buying produce

Buying produce out of season in the UK often means it's transported from other countries or is grown in greenhouses using extra light and heat, which significantly adds to its carbon footprint. Think about:

- Using produce that's in season in the UK.
- Buying local produce where you can.

Leftover food and drink

If you have leftover food and drink that can be used by others, consider redistributing it where possible. Talk to charitable food distributors like local foodbanks, cafés, or soup kitchens who can advise on their requirements. This will not only reduce waste but can help support those most in need in your local community too.



Pick responsible partners, suppliers, sponsors, and investments

It's not just your own organisation and culture that you can influence, it's others too.

- Make a list of those who supply you with goods and services, any sponsors, financial and other partners you have.
- Be curious, ask questions or do some research on what they're doing to become more environmentally sustainable, and where and how they source things.
- Check their values, culture, practices, and commitment to environmental sustainability match your own.

Think about:

- The kit, equipment, and merchandise you buy and sell. Check the materials they're made from, their supply chain, and how they travel.
- Prioritise environmentally sustainable, ethically made, recycled, and local products to reduce any negative social or environmental impacts. Do your research before you commit to buying new stock.
- If you have existing or upcoming contracts with suppliers, consider adding clauses or conditions that encourage them to be environmentally aware and responsible. Ask for evidence if you need to.
- If you hold or invest any funds, including any savings or pensions, check where your money is. Do the [practices of those you bank and invest with](#) match your commitment? A growing number of financial organisations are embedding sustainability into everything they do so there are an increasing number of options available if you decide you want to switch.



Encourage responsible travel

An important element of your climate impact will come from people travelling to and from your activities and facilities. While you can't control how people travel, you can help to influence their behaviour. Wherever you can, encourage and facilitate responsible travel:

- Encourage people to walk, cycle or scoot wherever they can and provide safe storage options.
- Share public transport routes.
- Promote lift sharing or carpooling.
- Promote the use of low emission vehicles including coach hire.
- Signpost to or provide electric car and e-bike charging points.
- Lots of local councils have Active Travel plans so check to see what's available to help you in your local area.

Remember to keep accessibility in mind, some of these travel options may not be suitable for everyone.



Connect into local networks and use your voice to influence change

As a sector, we have a collective responsibility and an enormous opportunity to drive change. Sport, recreation and physical activity brings people and communities together like nothing else. It's a fantastic catalyst for inspiring individual and collective action. Whatever the size, your network and influence is often bigger than you think.

It's important to lead from the front and use your voice to help raise awareness about the urgent need to address climate change and influence people's behaviours. Understanding what's happening in your local area and sport, and sharing your own progress is really important:

- Have a look at your local council's website. There are likely to be networks of local organisations who are taking action in the interests of the environment so find out who they are, what they are doing, and how you can help each other.
- Your National Governing Body or other representative bodies and regional Active Partnership may also be able to help so be sure to check with them too.

At the beginning of your journey, this may feel daunting. Remember you are not in this alone, you're now part of a global, national and local movement!

Useful Links

- [Sustainability – Sport England](#)
- [The Carbon Calculator – Carbon Footprint](#)
- [Footprint Calculator – WWF](#)
- [SME Carbon Footprint Calculator – Carbon Trust](#)
- [Climate Change – Greenpeace](#)
- [Environmental Policy and Action Plan Guidelines – Julie's Bicycle](#)
- [Bank Sustainability Commitments – Banktrack](#)
- [Guidance for community sports clubs – Preventing Plastic Pollution](#)
- [Sport England Club Matters](#)
- [BASIS – The British Association for Sustainable Sport](#)

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