

Active Norfolk's Environmental Sustainability Action Plan 2026-28

June 2026
Final version

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About our Environmental Sustainability Action Plan

“There is no doubt that our changing climate is already impacting our opportunities, motivation and ability to be active. Extreme weather is increasingly making it difficult for us to live healthy, active lives by creating a ‘doom loop’ where people become less motivated and more fearful of injury, with sporting opportunities increasingly cancelled and disrupted.

Without change now, the government’s target to get 3.5 million more people active by 2030 is very much in jeopardy – and our children will be the ones to suffer most. If places to play are unavailable, people will go and do something other than sport and physical activity, leading to small clubs going under and vital community organisations disbanding.”

Chris Boardman MBE ¹

Introduction

Overview of Active Norfolk

Active Norfolk plays a leading role in increasing physical activity and improving health and wellbeing across the region. As an Active Partnership part funded by Sport England, we are on a mission to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be active, grounded in our belief that movement improves lives.

We operate within a complex system where unequal access to opportunities, spaces and infrastructure for physical activity contributes to health inequalities across our communities. In response, we take a collaborative, partnership-led approach, working with organisations and people across health, education, local government and the community sector to address these challenges.

Our role is to connect, influence and support partners to create practical, targeted solutions that reach those who need it most. This includes a strong focus on reducing health inequalities through sustained, long-term investment and action, ensuring that resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact.

We recognise that enabling people to be active requires change across systems, places and communities. By working collectively and embedding physical activity into everyday life, we aim to create the conditions that make it possible for everyone to be active in ways that work for them, supporting healthier, more resilient communities across Norfolk.



Our role is to provide a strategic and enabling approach to the development of sport and physical activity in Norfolk.

We are a small organisation with 26 employees.

We rent offices at Easton College.

Norfolk County Council has set a target to reduce to achieve net zero carbon emissions on our estates by 2030; and to work closely, with regional partners, towards carbon neutrality within our wider areas by 2030.

Find out more about Norfolk's climate action plan [here](#).

Introduction

Why, how and what on our sustainability journey

Active Norfolk’s Environmental Sustainability Action Plan moves us from advocates for sustainability to actively putting it into practice.

Having a positive impact on **social sustainability** is fundamental to our role as an Active Partnership. As an organisation, we work to increase physical activity levels and improve the health and wellbeing of Norfolk’s communities and residents. We believe that physical activity is beneficial to everyone, that movement improves lives, and that everyone should have an equal chance to enjoy the benefits of an active life.

Active Norfolk occupies a unique role within the county as a strategic connector and enabler across the physical activity, sport and leisure system. This places us in a strong position to influence, support and convene partners, from local authorities and leisure operators to charities, community groups and schools. There are clear ‘sweet spots’ where encouraging individual and community movement can align with environmental benefits, enabling us to contribute to positive outcomes for both people and planet.

Environmental sustainability has always been something we have supported in principle, but it has yet to be integrated into our approach at all levels. We now recognise that we are operating in the context of a climate and biodiversity crisis, and that the physical activity and sport sector has both a responsibility and an opportunity to respond.

Through this Sustainability Action Plan, we are taking a more intentional and strategic approach to environmental sustainability, recognising that it must be interwoven into everything that we do and our role as advocates across the county. We also recognise the need for solutions to be **economically viable** given our funding and capacity constraints.

How we developed this Plan

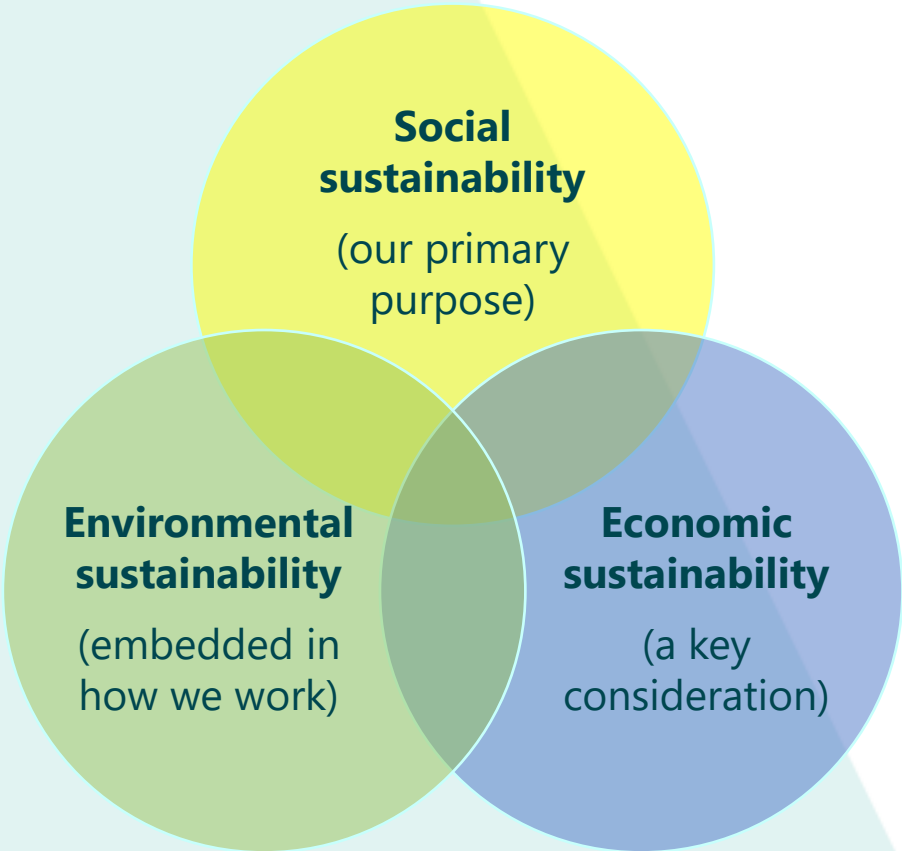
Active Norfolk worked closely with Useful Projects and Active Suffolk to develop this Environmental Sustainability Action Plan. The process included a sustainability maturity assessment to understand Active Norfolk’s current performance and desired future state over a two-year horizon, a carbon footprint assessment and review of actions taken to date, and a series of workshops to identify priority actions and practical mechanisms for implementation.

In parallel, we supported Active Suffolk to develop their own Environmental Sustainability Action Plan. Through this joint work, we identified many shared challenges and priorities, which helped sharpen our understanding of where we are starting from and where we can most effectively focus our efforts—particularly in terms of what we can realistically control and influence.

The Action Plan is structured in line with Sport England’s Sustainability Maturity Tool and is organised into two sections:

- Internal actions, focusing on embedding environmental sustainability within our own operations, including building management at Easton College and project delivery.
- External actions, focusing on how we influence and support wider systems change through collaboration with our partners.

This is our first Sustainability Action Plan. It has been designed to be practical and deliverable, while also challenging us to go further. We are excited about the role we can play in strengthening our own environmental performance, and even more so about the opportunity to support and influence positive change across the Norfolk sport and physical activity sector, working collaboratively towards shared ambition and impact.



Why environmental sustainability matters

The impact of climate change on physical activity

We are living through climate and biodiversity crises that have been changing the environments in which we live and move. Across the UK, species have declined on average by 19% from 1970 to 2023, and the impacts of climate change are becoming increasingly visible through more frequent extreme weather events. These changes present a growing challenge to physical activity and sport, affecting both the places where activity happens and levels of participation.

Rising temperatures, sea levels and more frequent flooding are already disrupting opportunities to be active. For example, sports pitches are increasingly waterlogged, leading to cancelled games and reduced access to facilities. Heatwaves and prolonged periods of rainfall also affect participation. Sport England's Active Lives survey found that 62% of adults did less physical activity as a result of extreme weather between August 2024 and 2025.

We also depend on healthy natural environments to support activity. Without thriving green and blue spaces, opportunities to be active in nature are reduced, limiting both access and enjoyment.

These impacts are not felt equally. Low-income households, older people, marginalised communities, children, and those with disabilities or long-term health conditions are disproportionately affected by the warming climate. The groups already experiencing the poorest health outcomes in Norfolk are often those most exposed to climate risks and least able to access opportunities for physical activity. As the climate crisis accelerates, it is essential that we act now to protect and adapt the systems, places and environments that enable people to be active.

Climate change is already affecting Norfolk, bringing rising sea levels, more frequent flooding, and hotter, drier summers.

Find out more about how Norfolk County Council is adapting to climate change [here](#).



Our role and responsibility in addressing the environmental impact of activity

While climate change is affecting physical activity, the sport and physical activity sector is also a contributor to it. Through energy use, travel and transport, consumption of materials and the operation of facilities and events, the sector has an environmental footprint that must be addressed. If we are to achieve our mission of enabling everyone to be active, we must also protect the environmental systems and infrastructure that make activity possible.

As a strategic leader, connector and enabler within the sector, we have a responsibility to take action and to support others to do the same. This means not only reducing our own impact but also enabling and encouraging collective action across the wider system via our position as a convenor across local government, health, education and the community sector.

We must advocate for a model of physical activity that supports both people and planet, recognising that environmental sustainability and wellbeing are deeply interconnected. By using our position to convene partners, share knowledge and promote innovation, we can help drive a shift towards more sustainable practices across the sector.

Where we are now

Our environmental sustainability journey

Our approach to environmental sustainability has developed over time, with a range of activities taking place both internally and externally. This has helped us build strong foundations across how we work as an organisation, how we support communities, and how we influence the wider system.

A timeline of our internal actions along our environmental sustainability journey is shown on the right.

Supporting partners and influencing systems change

Alongside our internal work, we have been working with partners to support delivery and influence wider systems change. Across Norfolk, we support programmes that connect people to nature and enable more sustainable ways of being active. This includes activity in green and blue spaces, alongside initiatives that promote wellbeing through nature-based activity. Examples include Active Parks, nature prescribing with partners such as the RSPB, and programmes like Green Futures that engage communities with the natural environment.

We are also supporting active travel and more sustainable movement through initiatives such as cycle hubs, school-based programmes and community projects, helping people to build physical activity into everyday life. Alongside this, we work with partners to improve the accessibility and design of places, ensuring that environments are inclusive, support active lifestyles and are better connected to the natural environment.

We also contribute to national initiatives such as the Sport Environment and Climate Coalition’s resource hub and are active participants in networks like the Active Partnership Climate Crew. Working collaboratively with partners including the Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust and local authority colleagues, we are helping to strengthen approaches to active travel and sustainable place-making.

Year	Initiative
2022	Launch of our Environmental Sustainability Vision
2023	Sustainability, Environment and Climate Continuous Improvement Group starts meeting quarterly Environmental Policy sets out high-level commitments to minimise environmental impact through our own organisation’s actions and advocating with partners and influencing others. Staff Environmental Performance Survey launched for the first time “How sustainable are you?” Resource developed with partners
2025	Environmental Impact integrated into Project Toolkit Staff Training on Environmental Policy
2026	Carbon footprint estimated Environmental Sustainability Action Plan launched

Case study

Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Holiday Activities and Food Programme

We help deliver the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, otherwise known as Big Norfolk Holiday Fun, supporting children eligible for free school meals during school holidays. Since its launch in 2018, HAF has helped address food insecurity, social isolation, and access to physical activity across Norfolk.

In 2025–2026, the programme worked with 105 providers and distributed £2.22 million in grants to community organisations, prioritising smaller, locally embedded groups. Provision has recently focused on older children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Beyond its impact on people, HAF also aims to be environmentally sustainable. Providers are encouraged and assessed on sustainable practices as part of funding criteria. Practical actions include sourcing food from local suppliers to reduce transport emissions, reducing printed promotional materials by standardising content across events to minimise waste from single use, and integrating recycling systems within delivery venues. But we know there is more to do, so we will continue to influence as set out in our action plan.

Environmental learning is also embedded into activities for children to build awareness of sustainable food systems. Many organisations run hands-on initiatives such as growing and preparing their own food, using compost bins, and redistributing food waste (e.g. sending surplus food home or for animal use).

Big Norfolk Holiday Fun demonstrates how a programme can deliver both social value and environmental outcomes supporting vulnerable children while fostering long-term sustainable behaviours within communities.



Providers are encouraged and assessed on sustainable practices as part of funding criteria

Integrating recycling systems within delivery venues.

Sourcing food from local suppliers to reduce transport emissions

Reducing printed promotional materials to minimise waste.

Our carbon footprint

Active Norfolk 2025-26

For the Financial Year 2024/2025 (FY 24/25), the Active Norfolk's operational carbon footprint was calculated to be approximately 64 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e).

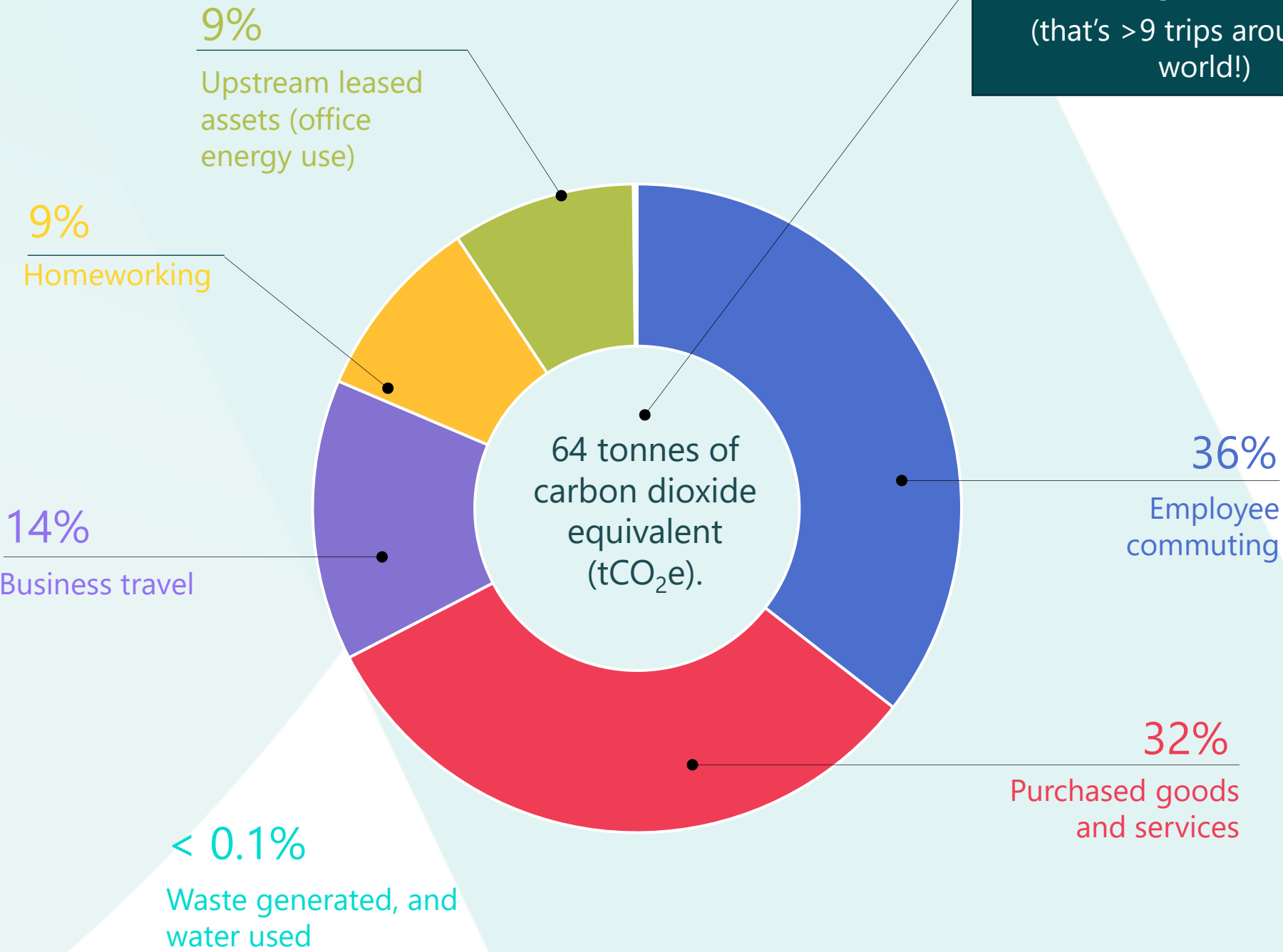
This was calculated using Useful Projects' Get Set Zero methodology, aligned with the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol best practice guidance.

Active Norfolk's carbon footprint is made up of 0% scope 1 and scope 2 emissions, and 100% scope 3 emissions. Active Norfolk does not have any scope 1 or 2 emissions because it does not own or control the energy systems of any facilities. The energy emissions from gas and electricity at their office are counted within scope 3.8 upstream leased assets.

The carbon hotspots for Active Norfolk operations are employee commuting, purchased goods and services and business travel. A full breakdown of all relevant emissions sources is provided in the table below.

We have included a series of actions in "Internal organisation, governance and projects" to start addressing these emissions.

Emissions category	Emissions (tCO ₂ e)	% of total emissions
Employee commuting	22.8	35.5%
Purchased goods and services	20.5	31.9%
Business travel	9.0	14%
Homeworking	5.9	9%
Upstream leased assets (office energy use)	5.9	9%
Waste	0.1	0.1%
Water use	0.0	0.1%
Total emissions	64.2	100%
Emissions per FTE	2.5	



Our sustainability maturity

Where we're at now, and where we want to get to

As part of developing this Environmental Sustainability Plan, we assessed our sustainability maturity using the [Sport England Sustainability Maturity Tool](#). We considered both our current state – how we are currently performing against the internal and external actions mapped out for each theme – and then our desired state – where we would like to be operating once this plan has been delivered (in two-years).

The result showed us advancing across all themes we felt we had a reasonability scope to influence. A summary of the results and key reflections are summarised on this page.

This Action Plan focuses on the themes we have the greatest influence over, and provides a pathway of actions to move us from our current to desired state.

1 Starting	2 Progressing	3 Sustainable	4 Restorative	5 Regenerative
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Theme	Sustainability Maturity Level	
	Current state	Desired state
Carbon emissions	1 Starting	2 Progressing
Circular economy	2 Progressing	3 Sustainable
Blue-green environment	1 Starting	3 Sustainable
Biodiversity gain	1 Starting	1 Starting
Tackling inequalities	1 Starting	2 Progressing
Enablers	1 Starting	3 Sustainable



The Plan

Active Norfolk 2026-2028

Owners:

Climate, Environment & Sustainability CIG

SMT

Active Norfolk Board

Sustainability vision for Active Norfolk

Core themes to shape our work

Our sustainability vision: Active Norfolk commits to manage our operations and projects in an environmentally responsible way, and champion more sustainable practices across our sport and physical activity network.

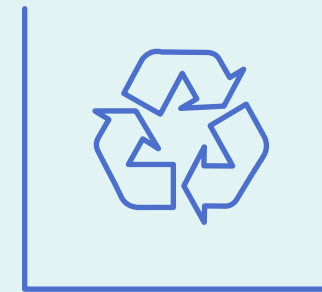
We have three priority themes that we will focus our environmental sustainability action on. These themes align to the themes in Sport England's Every Move Strategy; they are the specific areas in which we think we can make the most impact over the next two years.

Priority themes and goals



Carbon emissions: travel and facilities

We will reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with our operations and project delivery, as well as advocate for lower-carbon lifestyles across our network.



Circular economy: supply chains, products and waste

We will reduce material consumption and avoid waste in our operations and project delivery, and raise awareness about kit and equipment reuse initiatives in Norfolk.



Blue-green environments: quality and use

We will advocate for improvements to the quality and access of quality blue and green spaces where physical activity takes place, and raise awareness of the impacts of climate change and pollution on blue-green environments.

Priority focus areas

Looking internally and externally for impact

We have developed a series of focus areas to shape our action and measure our success over the next two years. They fall under two categories of internal and external action, as summarised in the table below.

Remit	Internal organisation, governance and projects				External advocacy		
	Largely within our control and we must tackle and embed into our everyday ways of working in order to walk the talk of being a more sustainable organisation.				Within our sphere of influence in order to play a role in the key levers of change.		
Mission	We will embed environmental sustainability into our everyday ways of working and in our ways of working with partners and suppliers.				We will use our position as a convener of local government, health, education and the community sector to encourage more collective action for environmental sustainability.		
Focus areas	1. Team training and engagement	2. Integrate into our practices	3. Reporting and improving	4. Influencing partners	5. Stakeholder networks	6. Active travel	7. Movement in nature

Two-year action plan

Internal organisation, governance and projects

Key	
●	All priority themes
●	Carbon reduction
●	Circular economy
●	Blue-green environmental quality

Mission: We will embed environmental sustainability into our everyday ways of working and in our ways of working with partners and suppliers.

	1. Team training and engagement	2. Integrate into our practices	3. Reporting and improving	4. Influencing partners
Actions	- Identify suitable basic sustainability training that speaks to the role and scope of Active Norfolk – educating on the impact of the physical activity sector on the environment, and the environment on the physical activity sector. - Secure 1-hour of all staff members time to undertake training. - Identify more comprehensive sustainability/carbon reduction training for 'Sustainability Champions' (e.g. Climate Literacy Training for Sport) - Secure a day of 2-3 people's time for additional training. - Collaborate with a local community group to run nature-based volunteering day annually, get all staff members to attend one volunteering day event. - Agree one day off for volunteering per year for all staff.	- Review internal practices and processes for whether they include environmental sustainability considerations. Key documents/process to review include: Decision-Making Framework; suppliers and service providers and tender processes (to address Purchased Goods and Services emissions); venues selection criteria and project planning process; SLA's & contracts. - Learn from existing successful environmental practices such as the waste reduction work with the service providers of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. - Raise awareness of and encourage update of the electric vehicle salary sacrifice scheme to address business travel carbon footprint emissions.	- Undertake carbon footprint annually, schedule it into the financial calendar alongside financial reporting. - Undertake an annual review of performance against this strategy, and openly disclose in our Impact Report. - Work with stakeholders (landlord, supply chain, employees) to reduce scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions. - Commit to reduce through joining thousands of other businesses in the Race to Zero campaign via the SME Climate Hub. - Climate, Environment & Sustainability Continuous Improvement Group develops a tracker of actions, sets realistic timelines for delivery and meets regular to review progress and distribute work. - Report to the board, becoming a mandatory item at quarterly board and SLT meetings. - Report progress to Sport England using their Sustainability Maturity Tool .	- Engage the management team at the College to improve the quality and availability of environmental data including energy use, waste generation and water consumption. - Engage the management team at the College to implement basic emissions reduction actions (e.g. switch in LED lights, renewable electricity tariff). - Engage the management team at the College to implement basic waste reduction initiatives (e.g. recycling and compost bins, bulky waste storage, office furniture reuse partnerships). - Taking learnings from the HAF programme, engage more project partners and suppliers in how their operations could be more environmentally sustainable. Focus guidance/requirements on carbon reduction, waste reduction and green/blue environment access and quality. - Request for all partners to have a policy/plan to address environmental sustainability in their operations, and for environmental sustainability requirements to be included in contracts.
Measures of Success	- All staff have attended sustainability training, increasing the baseline understanding and confidence on communicating environmental sustainability matters and taking action. - A few staff members have gained deeper expertise, building their confidence as a Sustainability Champion driving internal action and external advocacy across Norfolk. - All staff take part in an environmental volunteering initiative locally, and feel they are contributing to a positive local environment.	- All practices and processes, where useful, include a question or requirement that makes the practitioner consider environmental sustainability in their delivery. - Reduced environmental impact of our projects, and opportunities to deliver positive environmental opportunities captured.	- Organisational carbon footprinting is integrated into annual operations and reported annually. - Clear plan for carbon reduction, with priority actions disclosed upon regularly. - Climate, Environment & Sustainability Continuous Improvement Group tracker developed and reported on regularly to support progress.	- Collaborative and mutually beneficial relationship with the College management team – supporting them to make improvements – while reducing emissions and waste in building operations. - Reduced environmental impact of our projects, and opportunities to deliver positive environmental opportunities captured.

Two-year action plan

External advocacy

Key

All themes

Carbon reduction

Circular economy

Blue-green environmental quality

Mission: We will use our position as a convenor of local government, health, education and the community sector to encourage more collective action for environmental sustainability.

	5. Stakeholder networks	6. Active travel	7. Movement in nature
Actions	- Continue to attend Active Partnership Climate Crew meetings and engage in ongoing initiatives. - Start building relationships with local sustainability stakeholders in the Council and the region (e.g. Norfolk Climate Change Partnership) and attend events to expand our network into the sustainability world. - Aim to organise an event where stakeholders from sustainability and physical activity networks are convened to discuss mutually beneficial initiatives. This event could be a collaboration with a local sustainability network (e.g. Norfolk Climate Change Partnership). - Meet Active Suffolk on a quarterly basis to share the progress against the two-year plan and trouble-shoot challenges.	- Champion built environment design that enables active travel across local networks, including integrating the Healthy Streets approach. - Seek to replicate the success of Bacton Hire Hub – active travel equipment for families to hire – at other schools who could benefit from better active travel services across Norfolk. - Collaborate with the Walking, Wheel, Cycle Trust (formally Sustrans) on engaging local underrepresented communities in cycling/active travel related works. - Champion active travel initiatives across local networks for the dual benefit of physical activity and the environment (e.g. cycle hubs, cycle workshops, Beryl bike/scooters,). - For any existing active travel work, look to embed a discussion point and/or explanation of the environmental co-benefits into existing active travel offer to support awareness raising.	- Utilise the Place Partnerships as a key mechanism to identify and then organise initiatives to remove barriers from people who have poor access to nature. - Work with local community organisations (e.g. Norfolk Clubhouse's Watton Hub) to fund and/or coordinate initiatives that reduce barriers to people accessing movement in nature. - Continue to use and expand programmes for young people (e.g. Green Futures and Youth Park Run) to empower the younger generation to get out into nature and inspire them to have an active role in environmental challenges. - Take learnings from the RSPB nature prescribing project and advocate for people to spend time in blue and green spaces where people can be physically active.
Measures of success	- Proactive involvement in Active Partnership Climate Crew. - Learnings from other Active Partnership fed back to Active Norfolk internally. - Number of convening events between physical activity and sustainability organisations in Norfolk. - Learning and knowledge sharing between Active Norfolk and Active Suffolk.	- More people walking and cycling benefiting their health and the environment. - Starting to be known and local actors for the benefits of local people's health and the local environment - Starting to be seen as a leader in active travel (and Healthy Streets Approach) to guide local initiatives and built environment projects. - Close ongoing relationship with the Walking, Wheel, Cycle Trust.	- More people spending time in nature, especially people who face significant barriers currently. - More people engaged and enjoying the natural environment, leading to more engagement with protecting green and blue spaces.

Implementation

How and when we deliver this plan?

Our Climate, Environment & Sustainability Continuous Improvement Group will be responsible for monitoring progress against the plan and recording measures of success.

Ultimately our CEO will be accountable for delivery of this plan, ensuring resource for training and development opportunities are available and ensure the environment is at the heart of our decisions.

To hold ourselves to account, the key governance mechanisms we will put in place include:

- This Environmental Sustainability Action Plan will be published on our website.
- Progress against the plan will be reported on annually, reviewed annually with the Board and included in our external facing annual report.
- Progress against the action plan will be reviewed by the senior management team quarterly.
- The actions identified in the plan will be extracted and assigned a timeline for delivery and responsibility within the Climate, Environment & Sustainability Continuous Improvement Group and more widely across Active Norfolk.
- The Climate, Environment & Sustainability Continuous Improvement Group will meet on at least a quarterly basis to discuss progress against the actions.
- Team meetings will include ESG as an agenda and discussion item, at least on a bi-annual basis.
- All Board papers, funding bids, project proposals and project plans will include a section to review potential environment impact of proposed work / decision being taken.

This strategy should be delivered over the next two years.

After the two-year period, the Plan should be reviewed and updated as needed. The update process should be as follows:

- Review progress against all themes in the [Sport England Sustainability Maturity Assessment](#) and consider whether the priority themes in this Action Plan are still the areas in which we think we can make the most impact. Incorporate actions against the other topics, if we believe we have the opportunity to make a positive impact.
- Review achievement of the two-year action plan - remove the items that have been achieved and provide new items to advance the focus areas.



Glossary of terms

Cutting through the jargon

Biodiversity gain: An increase in the variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular place. Biodiversity is essential for planetary and societal health; we rely on it to survive. 'Biodiversity loss' is the decline or disappearance of species.

Blue-green spaces: Outdoor environments - either natural or manmade - that prominently feature natural environments – such as parks, woodland and meadows as well as ponds, canals and lakes - and are accessible to people

Carbon footprint: An annual inventory of an organisation's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Carbon hotspots: Sources of high levels of carbon emissions, for organisations to focus their carbon reduction efforts on.

Carbon neutral: Achieving a balance between the greenhouse gases put into the atmosphere and those taken out.

Carbon offsets (and insets): Refers to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions or an increase in carbon storage (within own supply chain) that is used to compensate for emissions that occur elsewhere.

Circular economy: An alternative to our current 'linear' materials and waste system (take-waste-dispose). In a circular economy waste is substantially reduced and materials are circulated throughout the economy at their highest value and utility.

Climate justice: According to Climate Just UK, climate justice relates to concerns about the inequitable outcomes for different people and places associated with vulnerability to climate impacts and the fairness of policy and practice responses to address climate change and its consequences.

Climate resilience: The ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events or disturbances related to climate change (e.g. floods, extreme weather). Includes adaptation to climate change, resilience to adverse climate events, and community climate preparedness.

Environmental sustainability: The ability to maintain an ecological balance in our planet's natural environment and conserve natural resources to support the wellbeing of current and future generations.

Just transition: A 'just transition' for the sport and physical activity sector means transitioning to a low-carbon economy in a way that's fair to everyone, and where the benefits are shared widely.

Net zero carbon: (according to the Science-Based Targets Initiative, Net-Zero Standard) emissions reductions of 90–95%, balancing the residual 5–10% emissions with carbon removals.

Nature recovery: The protection and restoration of wildlife-rich habitats. Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a new way of prioritising nature needs on a more local and focused level.

Scope 1,2,3 Emissions: A method of categorising where an organisation's emissions come from.

Scope 1: Direct emissions from sources a company owns or controls (e.g. fuel burned on sites or by company vehicles).

Scope 2: Indirect emissions from purchased energy (primarily electricity, steam, or heat the company uses).

Scope 3: All other indirect emissions across the supply chain, not included in Scope 2

Tackling inequalities: The most disadvantaged communities are likely to be those most affected by climate change and extreme weather events. By tackling inequalities, we can also help the most disadvantaged communities to become more resilient to the effects of climate change.

