

Carbon Literacy Training (CLT) for Ashington Sports Clubs

The carbon footprint of grassroots sports

When it comes to sport at a grassroots level, it is challenging to measure carbon emissions due to the various factors involved, such as

- The impact of sports facilities operations
- Transportation modes used by participants and staff to travel
- Consumption of products and services at the facilities and events

According to a report, local sports facilities and leisure centres contribute as much as 40% of a council's carbon footprint. For instance, a Buckinghamshire-based tennis and fitness centre produced 121 tonnes of CO₂e in 2019, equivalent to powering over 100 homes.

According to a 2018 study in Germany, the average annual carbon footprint for individual sports was around 1006 kg CO₂e, while for an individual participating in team sports was 514 kg CO₂e. Sport-specific comparisons show skydiving has the highest carbon footprint (2,841kg CO₂e), followed by golf (2,195 kg CO₂e). Ironically, golf, which may seem green from the outside, has a considerable environmental impact. An average golf course in the US has an annual carbon footprint of approximately 796,577 CO₂e, most of which comes from energy consumption and pesticides.

Climate action at the grassroots level...

At the grassroots level, many local clubs in the UK and Ireland are taking steps to reduce their emissions. Notably, community involvement is ingrained at the grassroots level, so clubs can influence their members and local communities to become more sustainable.

Forrest Green Rovers in Gloucestershire is the world's first vegan football team, competing in the EFL League One. Their sustainability credentials go far beyond their footballers' vegan diets, having been recognised by FIFA as the **world's greenest football club** through a solar-powered stadium, a zero-emissions coach for match day travel, and a green strip made from waste coffee beans and recycled plastic.

The Green Blue is a sustainability challenge for university sailing clubs hosted by sailing's governing body, RYA. Each participating club will appoint a Sustainability Officer to help the club achieve bronze, silver, and gold awards. Some actions required to achieve these awards include undertaking environmental assessments of the clubhouse, extending equipment life, and running environmental awareness campaigns.

In Ireland, the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) have supported their community clubs with the Green Club GAA initiative. Success stories include Clan Na Gaels, who replaced their halogen floodlights with LEDs using community donations, and Kilmacud Crokes, who created a cycle scheme for player and fan travel. The advice from all these grassroots clubs is to build partnerships to gain funding and to get the whole community involved.

The sport sector's platform

Sport provides an incredible platform for promoting behaviour change and has a long history of activism. Athletes have used their voices to stand for climate activism. A shining example is British world record sailor Ellen McArthur who in 2009 founded the hugely successful Ellen McArthur Foundation focusing on implementing the circular economy.

Whether grassroots or global, clubs and organisations can use their platform to inform and inspire sports fans by displaying best practise, supporting sustainable participation, and speaking loudly about climate change. The upcoming Carbon Literacy Sports Kit will support the sports sector to do just that. This flexible and adaptable Toolkit for certified Carbon Literacy training within sports clubs, venues, manufacturers, and governing bodies will launch in Spring 2023.