



Environmental Sustainability Action Plan

2026-2031



Be part of it!



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Introduction

About Us

Active Cumbria is one of 42 Active Partnerships covering every part of England, primarily funded by Sport England to increase the number of people taking part in physical activity. We prioritise our work into the places of greatest need, and work with a wide range of local partners to achieve our outcomes, these include sport clubs, local authorities, health, education, and many voluntary sector organisations who reach into and connect with our communities.

Our Mission

Improving lives through physical activity.

Our Values

- Ambitious
- Collaborative
- Compassionate
- Empowering
- Innovative

Executive Summary

This document provides the background to Sport England and Active Cumbria's environmental sustainability work and outlines its significance in ensuring a long-term, sustainable physical activity offer in Cumbria. It explains the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan (ESAP's) relationship with Active Cumbria's Five-Year Plan, the Code for Sports Governance and Sport England's Every Move Strategy, and outlines environmental aspirations for the period 2026-2031, for Active Cumbria as an organisation and for the wider sport and physical activity sector.

The Action Plan aligns with the Sustainability Maturity Tool designed by the British Association for Sustainability in Sport (BASIS) and explains the importance of our role in furthering the environmental sustainability of Cumbria's sport and physical activity sector. It provides a base from which to progress over the coming five years and beyond.

Introduction

The Active Cumbria Environmental Sustainability Project Group

Whilst Environmental Sustainability is everyone's responsibility, a group of representatives from across the Active Cumbria team have contributed to developing this action plan and lead on delivering the actions outlined within it. This group is led by two Co-Leads and supported by an Advisory Board Champion.

Collaboration and Partnership Working

Collaboration and partnership have been key in gaining the valuable insight and advice which has enabled us to already begin work towards our environmental goals, building the foundations from which to move forwards over the coming years. An ongoing ambition across the six themes outlined in our plan is to grow and develop this collaborative approach, ensuring that partnerships continue to be central to our environmental work.

Already, we have:

- Signed up to the Active Partnerships National Organisation (APNO) **Environmental Sustainability Commitment**
- Pledged adherence to the 2025 **Cumbria Climate Assembly Report**
- Engaged with APNO's Environmental Sustainability and Active Environments communities of practice
- Delivered **Eco-Friendly School Games** events
- Showed support and advocacy for Sport England's **Every Move** strategy
- Formed positive working relationships with relevant organisations such as **Zero Carbon Cumbria**, **Cumbria Local Nature Partnership**, **Cumbria People and Nature Network**, the **British Association of Sustainability in Sport**, **Futureproof Cumbria**, **Going Green Together**, the **Town and Country Planning Association**, **Cumbria Wildlife Trust**, **Raise** and the **Woodland Trust**.
- Worked closely with Cumberland, and Westmorland and Furness Council's Healthy Spaces, Active Travel, Public Health and Community Food teams.

Introduction

Why an ESAP?

The environment's link with physical activity is inextricable – from the necessity for safe, accessible blue and green space and suitable weather conditions, through to the physical activity and social opportunities presented by thinking in a more sustainable way. Active Cumbria recognises the urgency of this situation and the potential it has to influence the role we play, how we play it and the support we provide to the wider sector as they learn to adapt to the changing environment. We also understand that as an organisation we are duty bound to do all we can to help preserve the natural environment which contributes so crucially towards the health and wellbeing of Cumbria's population.

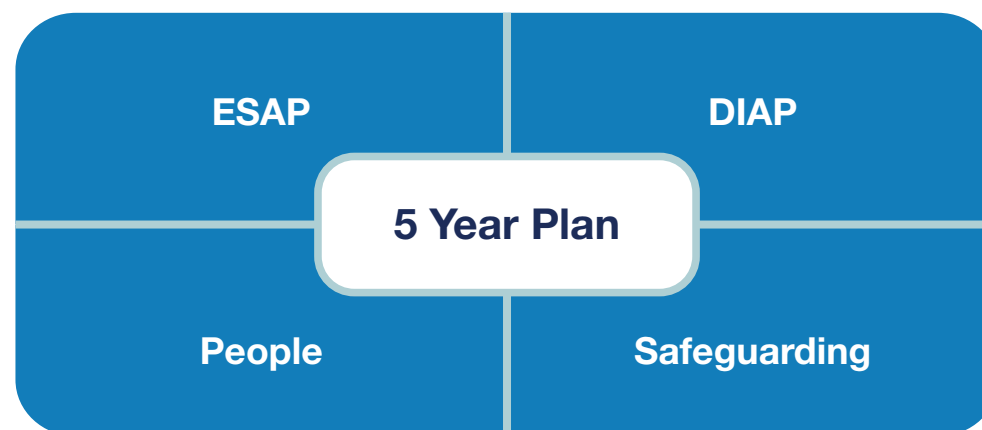
Our ESAP 2026-2031, which aligns with our five-year plan, is designed to inform, inspire and motivate. It gives an insight into the environmental sustainability work we are already undertaking, outlines our aspirations and commitments over the next five years, and holds us to account for our decisions – providing a model against which to measure our ambition to enable us and the physical activity sector to work more sustainably.

It outlines how we will maintain, deepen and expand our current environmental sustainability work, considering the environment

in every decision we make – in line with Sport England's commitment to net zero by 2050 – whilst also exploring new ideas, approaches, and collaborative ways of working. It will facilitate the provision of ongoing support both internally and for external partners towards making meaningful, lasting environmental change.

Our ESAP demonstrates our adherence with the Environmental and Social Governance requirements outlined by UK Sport and Sport England's Code for Sports Governance, and is therefore essential in securing stakeholder investment from 2027 and beyond.

It has been designed by our Environmental Sustainability Project Group in collaboration with our Advisory Board, and will be reviewed annually.



Introduction

Action Plan

Our action plan is closely aligned with the 'Every Move' strategy, which is Sport England's commitment to Environmental Sustainability. Within the strategy, six themes are identified, upon which we have based our environmental aspirations for both Active Cumbria as an organisation and for Cumbria's sport and physical activity sector.

1. **Enabling the Workforce:** Increase our organisational knowledge of environmental sustainability through ongoing training and collaboration, and support partners to access opportunities which will enable them to do similarly.
2. **Tackling Inequalities:** Ensure our environmental sustainability support reflects the need identified by those who are most impacted by the changing climate, and that it is weighted appropriately towards those most in need.
3. **Reducing Carbon Emissions:** Undertake a carbon audit of our practices to inform subsequent steps towards

reducing our carbon emissions, and advocate for low-carbon practices both internally and externally with a particular focus on travel and procurement.

4. **Circular Economy:** Review and reduce the amount of material bought and wasted, ensuring those purchases which are really needed are made in an environmentally sustainable way.
5. **Blue-Green Environment and Biodiversity Gain:** Explore opportunities to regenerate and improve blue and green spaces to improve participation and biodiversity, and advocate for sustainable practices related to the planning and use of outdoor space.
6. **Building Resilience to the Changing Climate:** Support partners to put plans in place which mitigate the changing climate's negative effect on participation levels.

ACTION PLAN

1. Enabling the Workforce

We recognise that our staff are not experts on the subjects of environmental sustainability and climate change. To help us make positive change and to support the sport and physical activity sector and our partners in Cumbria, we acknowledge that we need to increase our own organisational knowledge and capacity, as well as to seek the support of other organisations in delivering this plan effectively.



Organisational knowledge and capacity goals	Internal Action	Lead	Timeframe
1. We will have clear operational and strategic leadership for environmental sustainability.	1a) Environmental Sustainability Lead or Co-Leads in place. 1b) Environmental Sustainability Manager supporting the Lead(s). 1c) Board Champion Leadership in place.	AC Team	Reviewed annually
2. Staff will increase their environmental sustainability knowledge through formal training and peer to peer support.	2a) All staff complete the Cumberland Council online (1hr) e-learning course on Carbon Literacy. 2b) Staff and Advisory Board members will also be offered the opportunity to attend a Climate Fresk workshop. 2c) The Travel Actively Team and Environmental Sustainability Plan Group complete a Carbon Literacy training course through BASIS or other provider.	ACLT ACLT TA and ESPG	Staff Induction Completed Feb/ June 2025. Training of new staff to be arranged
3. Environmental sustainability is embedded within operations and in line with section 5.2 of 'A Code for Sports Governance'.	3a) Ensure environmental sustainability is embedded within operations and in line with section 5.2 of 'A Code for Sports Governance' including job descriptions and decision criteria. 3b) Environmental sustainability considered in organisational risk register. 3c) Environmental Sustainability is regularly discussed at Board and senior leadership level.	ACLT ACLT ACLT	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing

Our Goals for the sport and physical activity sector in Cumbria	External Action	Lead	Timeframe
4. We will actively grow the knowledge and capacity beyond our own organisation, across networks and partners.	We will identify individual needs through engagement and consultation, and this support could include: 4a) Support for partners to access the Buddle Environmental Sustainability learning resources. 4b) Work with local expert partners to deliver relevant sector specific learning sessions. 4c) Provide support to the sector to apply for funding towards sustainability elements of community projects.	AC Team	Reviewed annually

ACTION PLAN

2. Tackling Inequalities

We will promote physical activity and wellbeing while upholding the principles of social responsibility and sustainability. We are dedicated to supporting those who are most susceptible to health inequity and the effects of the changing climate, ensuring that they have a strong voice to inform future activities and plans.



Organisational goals towards tackling environmental inequalities	Internal Action	Lead	Timeframe
1. To ensure that environmental sustainability considerations play a prominent role in the distribution of funding which is overseen or influenced by Active Cumbria.	1a) Ensure relevant funding applications provide details of environmental impact and considerations, and that these are suitably questioned and challenged.	AC Team	Ongoing
	1b) Continue to target support towards those who experience the greatest impact and reduction in participation due to the changing climate.	AC Team	Ongoing
2. Our staff gain appropriate work experience within environmental organisations and projects.	2a) Promote awareness of opportunities to utilise Cumberland Council's two days of annual volunteering leave in support of environmental initiatives in the most affected areas.	ACLT	Staff Induction
		ACLT	Ongoing
		TA and ESPG	Ongoing
Our goals for the sport and physical activity sector in Cumbria to tackle environmental inequalities	External action	Lead	Timeframe
3. Gain a greater understanding of the sector's support needs across different aspects of environmental sustainability.	3a) Work with partners to expand the organisational survey piloted through 'Let's Move!' sessions, incorporating the 'Principles for Good Engagement' outlined in the 2025 Cumbria Climate Assembly Report. 3b) Ensure that our ongoing environmental offer is shaped by the results of the survey.	ESPG / AC Team	Underway, and ongoing

ACTION PLAN

3. Reducing Carbon Emissions

We will undertake a carbon audit of our practices, which will inform subsequent steps towards effectively reducing our carbon emissions and will be reviewed annually. We will seek to reduce our carbon emissions and those of sector partners through the provision of information and guidance, and by advocating for low-carbon practices, with a particular focus on travel and procurement.



Reducing Our Greenhouse Gas Emissions Goal	Internal Action	Lead	Timeframe
1. We will assess our climate impacts and reduce carbon emissions by 25% by 2030 to keep us on track to achieve net zero emissions by 2040.	1a) Complete current carbon emissions calculation.	AC Team	September 2026
	1b) Reduce the carbon footprint of our digital data storage. • By highlighting the issue to team members. • Regularly setting time aside for file deletion.		
	1c) Reduce the digital footprint of our website. • Complete an assessment and set reduction target for the forthcoming re-design of the website.	MarComms Lead	In line with website redevelopment
	1d) Increase staff active travel, public transport use and lift shares. • Promote staff benefits in terms of Cycle To Work scheme. Promote time allowed by council policy for active travel to meetings in work time. • Consider public transport options to team meeting when choosing venues. • Set up a lift share scheme/spreadsheet to co-ordinate travel to meetings.	ESPG to lead with support from Travel Actively	Immediate and in progress

Reducing Our Greenhouse Gas Emissions Goal	External Action	Lead	Timeframe
2. We will seek to reduce the carbon emissions of sector partners through the provision of information and guidance, and by advocating for low-carbon practices.	2a) Increase delegate active travel, public transport use and lift sharing to our large stakeholder events. • Venues to be selected which enable delegates to arrive by public transport or active travel if they choose. • Include active travel and public transport options as first options in the 'how to get there' information. Road and parking directions provided last. • An option for consent to share delegate details to encourage travelling together to be added to all booking via Eventbrite.	Operations and programme lead officers	Ongoing
	2b) Increase delegate active travel, public transport use and lift sharing to our CPD and smaller events. • Include active travel and public transport options as first options in the 'how to get there' information. Road and parking directions provided last. • An option for consent to share delegate details to encourage travelling together to be added to all booking via Eventbrite.	Operations and programme lead officers	Ongoing

ACTION PLAN

4. Circular Economy

We will review, and aim to significantly reduce, the volume of material bought or wasted. We will question the necessity of purchase – where a purchase is unavoidable, we will ensure wherever possible that this is sustainably sourced, and that the item is chosen based on durability and reusability ahead of cost.



Organisational knowledge and capacity goals	Internal Action	Lead	Timeframe
1. We will reduce the number of products we procure.	1a) We will support our staff to understand the value of sustainable procurement. 1b) A process will be developed to enable consistent decision making around sustainable procurement ensuring purchases are effective and relevant. These will include details of any environmental considerations and who is responsible for the final decision. 1c) We will act in accordance with the Kick Plastic out of Sport Pledge.	AC Team	Ongoing
2. We will make sustainable choices where possible in all procurement decisions in the event that reduction is not possible.	2a) We will reuse equipment where possible. 2b) We will prioritise local suppliers before looking further afield for equipment/food for events. 2c) We will use FSC accredited sources for our printed publications.	AC Team	Ongoing
3. We will facilitate the redistribution of our surplus uniform, sports kit and resources.	3a) We will complete an internal annual audit of kit, allocate it where needed in the team then look to distribute it to organisations or groups that would benefit from using it.	ESPG	Annually

Our goals for the sports sector in Cumbria	External action	Lead	Timeframe
4. We will collaborate with our project partners to ensure they have sufficient kit, can procure it in the most sustainable way and are able to redistribute any surplus.	4a) We will investigate KitRound and other kit redistribution schemes, and signpost partners as appropriate.	ESPG	Ongoing
5. We will support funded organisations to purchase sustainably.	5a) We will educate organisations at the funding application stage on the benefits of a circular economy and how it could impact their group, we will: • Advocate for buying local and sustainably. • Encourage organisations to reduce their consumption where possible. • Signpost organisations to schemes that can help them with purchasing sustainably.	AC Team	Project-by-project basis

ACTION PLAN

5. Blue-Green Environment and Biodiversity Gain

We will ensure that the organisations we support maximise the opportunity to protect, regenerate and improve green and blue spaces they own or use, for the benefit of biodiversity. We will do this through collaboration with local nature organisations, whose skills and knowledge we aim to cascade to our Team and to wider partners. We will create positive solutions to help improve the local environment, by increasing and advocating for sustainable practices aimed at reducing microplastic pollution, improving air quality, and supporting the planning of accessible, inclusive, low-carbon communities.



Organisational Knowledge and Capacity Goals	Internal Action	Lead	Timeframe
1. Our knowledge of biodiversity and the blue-green environment is increased.	1a) Continue to remain aware of opportunities to increase our knowledge of biodiversity and the blue-green environment, through education and partnership working. 1b) Ensure we are aware of the appropriate contacts within Cumberland Council's Environment and Climate Team, and Westmorland and Furness Council's Climate and Nature Team, for support as appropriate.	ESPG	Ongoing
2. Gain knowledge of planning opportunities and procedure, and influence local plans for the development of outdoor space.	2a) Maintain a presence on the Active Environments Community of Practice hosted by APNO/SE, and cascade information internally as appropriate. 2b) Provide representation and input into Local Plan Strategy Groups.	System Team System Team	Ongoing Ongoing
3. We are aware of opportunities available to include biodiverse elements into events.	3a) Continue work to identify potential mementos such as seed packets and bracelets, 'plant a tree' schemes, and biodiversity activities which could be utilised at our events in place of less sustainable mementos.	ESPG	Ongoing
4. We are aware of and promote activities which utilise blue and green space to its full potential	4a) Share details of, or highlight, activities which prioritise the blue-green environment and biodiversity at local forums, via social media or our newsletters as appropriate.	AC Team	Ongoing

Our goals for the sport and physical activity sector in Cumbria	External action	Lead	Timeframe
5. The sector is more aware of opportunities to improve biodiversity in places and spaces.	5a) Our staff signpost local organisations and individuals to nature organisations appropriate to their need and/or interest.	AC Team	Ongoing
	5b) Our staff raise awareness of local and national strategies and campaigns which focus on improving the quality and usage of blue-green space – through social media, newsletters and local engagements as appropriate.	AC Team	Ongoing
	5c) Share and promote opportunities on an ongoing basis for Cumberland Council colleagues to use their two days' annual volunteering leave in support of blue-green organisations.	MarComms Lead	Ongoing

ACTION PLAN

6. Building our Resilience to the Changing Climate

We will support our partners to put plans in place to cope with extreme weather events. Consideration and mitigation of the effect of the changing climate, particularly extreme weather, on participants and assets will be involved in every discussion around future participation.



Organisational knowledge and capacity goals	Internal Action	Lead	Timeframe
1. We will educate and upskill the team to be able to identify risks to funded partners from extreme weather events and offer support to mitigate/ minimise them.	1a) Provide education sessions to the team focused on the impact of extreme weather on sport, including real life examples and the mitigatory approach.	ESPG and Locality Officers	Ongoing
2. We will include an environmental and weather guidance section in the risk assessments for events delivered by the team.	2a) We will provide clear guidance for mitigating/ minimising weather risks. 2b) We will create a clear process for cancelling events, such as School Games, due to weather (including heat). This will clarify the ramifications for both the Active Cumbria team and providers. 2c) We will ensure our equipment is appropriate for the weather conditions and is not used if the weather increases risk to users.	AC Team	Ongoing

Our goals for the sport and physical activity sector in Cumbria	External action	Lead	Timeframe
3. We will support our partners to ensure they provide participants with adequate protection for safe activity.	3a) We will signpost clubs to guidance from their NGB regarding adverse weather as appropriate. 3b) We will support clubs to update their risk assessments & welfare plans, taking into consideration how to deal with adverse weather.	AC Team	Ongoing
4. We will support our partners to ensure their facilities, infrastructure and equipment are resilient to extreme weather.	4a) We will support partners to ensure adaptations and design for extreme weather are considered within plans for capital development, to include but not limited to flooding risks, shaded areas, and air-conditioning. 4b) We will educate our partners on the risks to their facilities. Infrastructure and equipment from extreme weather with advice on how to mitigate those risks. 4c) We will discuss extreme weather risks as part of our funding conversations and encourage partners to include provision in their bids.	AC Team	Ongoing

Glossary

Adaptation: Changing what we do to deal with climate change and its effects. This can mean reducing harm or making the most of new opportunities. Sometimes nature also needs human help to adapt.

Biodiversity: The range of different plants and animals in an area. A high level of biodiversity is important for healthy ecosystems.

Climate Change: Long-term changes in the Earth's climate, usually over decades or more. These can be caused by natural factors, but are now mainly driven by human activities like burning fossil fuels and changing how land is used.

Carbon Emissions: Gases like carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane (CH₄) released into the air. These gases trap heat and cause the planet to warm.

Climate Fresk: A group workshop that helps people understand climate change and feel inspired to take action. More info: <https://climatefresk.org/en-gb/>

Climate Impacts: The effects of climate change, such as extreme weather, flooding, droughts, and rising sea levels. These can affect people's health, jobs, homes, and the natural environment.

Health Equity: Making sure everyone has a fair chance to be healthy, by removing barriers like poverty or lack of access to services.

Low-carbon: Activities that produce very little carbon pollution.

Microplastic Pollution: Very small pieces of plastic (less than 5 mm) that end up in the environment because of plastic waste.

Mitigation: Actions taken to reduce climate change, mainly by cutting greenhouse gas emissions or removing them from the air.

Net Zero: Cutting emissions as much as possible and balancing any remaining emissions by removing the same amount from the atmosphere (for example, through tree planting or new technology).

Resilience: The ability to cope with and recover from climate impacts. Building resilience means preparing for and adapting to change while also reducing emissions.

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Active Cumbria
Cumberland Council
Cumbria House
107-117 Botchergate
Carlisle CA1 1RD
01228 226885

feedback@activecumbria.org
www.activecumbria.org