

Churchill Fellowship: Sports and Sustainability



Learning from best practice in Switzerland, the USA & Canada, how can we better mobilise sporting communities in the UK for environmental education and action?

Rachael Thomas
Belfast, Northern Ireland
[linkedin.com/in/rachaelthomas7](https://www.linkedin.com/in/rachaelthomas7)
www.churchillfellowship.org

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Please see some further information on my fellowship below:

- **What's my vision?** I want to see all individuals, clubs, organisations and governing bodies involved in sport in the UK playing their part to protect the environment and green / blue spaces by taking action themselves and through educating, empowering and equipping those within their sphere of influence to take action.
- **What's the question I want to answer?** What are the most effective tools that sporting communities (players/ fans/ local clubs/ local, regional and national governing bodies, arenas and stadiums) in the UK can use to start or strengthen/ further develop their environmental action journeys?
- **What outcome do I hope for?** Based on best practice observed during the Fellowship, I want to build a bank of practical tools, case studies, project ideas and resources that sporting communities in the UK can use and adapt to meet their own needs.
- **How will I achieve this?** By meeting with and learning from individuals, organisations, and experts working in this space across the USA / Canada to understand what tools they use for promoting environmental action in their work. I hope also to get the opportunity to see some projects and initiatives in action.
- **Key Information:** I will be travelling to Switzerland between 18th October and 6th November 2024 and the USA & Canada between 23rd March and 18th April 2025. I would love to meet with you to hear more about your work and how we can use sport as a vehicle for promoting a greener future for all. If you would be interested, please contact me on rachael238@hotmail.com.

Churchill Fellowship: Sports and Sustainability

A Sports & Sustainability Starting Point...

- **What is my hope for the sports sector with respect to sustainability?** I want to see all individuals, clubs, organisations and governing bodies involved in sport in the UK playing their part to protect the environment and green / blue spaces by taking action themselves and through educating, empowering and equipping those within their sphere of influence to take action. Sport has the unique ability to reach across geographies and politics to unite people around one team or one goal. With 30 million adults in England playing sport or taking part in physical activity every week¹, there are a wealth of individuals already impacted by or having an impact on our climate and environment. If we can mobilise and empower even a small part of this group to start taking climate action, the impact could be wide-reaching.
- **What impact does sport have on the environment and vice versa?** Sport and the environment are intrinsically linked, with both having the opportunity to either positively or negatively impact the other. Increased usage of grass pitches with considerable energy and water required to maintain, flying individuals and teams around the world, hosting large-scale events and building new facilities, the ongoing desire for new kit and equipment and improper waste management processes, are just some examples of the impact of sports organisations on the planet. Increased air pollution and extreme heat are causing players to be ill on the pitch and has an impact on performance and recovery, increased flooding is ruining pitches and having a financial impact due to the cancellation or delay of fixtures, drought is causing more work for ground staff to maintain healthy pitches and increased temperatures is leading to a shortening of the season for some winter sports are just some of the examples of how the environment has an impact on sport.
- **What barriers / challenges do sports organisations face when trying to implement sustainability?** Many of the organisations I spoke to were facing the same challenges. Some of the most common examples include:
 - Lack of funding available to support sustainability efforts
 - Lack of buy-in from senior staff, leading to a lack of importance placed on the sustainability agenda
 - An emphasis on short-term performance / profit, over long-term sustainability
 - Lack of resourcing dedicated to sustainability
 - Lack of knowledge / expertise across the organisation
 - Local contexts and political environments (e.g. challenges around how waste is sorted by local agencies etc.)
 - High costs associated with some environmental activities
 - Lack of buy-in from athletes or fan bases
 - Fears around being seen to be “greenwashing”

¹: <https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-inspiration/record-numbers-playing-sport-and-taking-part-physical-activity>

Access the Resource here: [A Sports & Sustainability Starting Point](#)

Churchill Fellowship: Sports and Sustainability

What's next?

- What key learnings did I observe from my meetings with the sports organisations?** The reality is that there is no “one size fits all” strategy for sustainability within sports organisations. Each organisation is unique, differing in size, capacity, reach, financial backing and senior leadership / stakeholder / member buy-in. Each organisation needs to take time to look at their operations, understanding what impact their operations have on the climate, what impact the climate is having on their operations and then determine the best next steps and where they can affect the most change. Many organisations want to see examples and case studies from other organisations so they can be inspired and empowered to take action, whilst having the ability to adapt to suit their particular needs and context.
- So what?** I wanted the output of my Fellowship to be a practical resource that sports organisations could use to start their sustainability journey. Recognising the different challenges and contexts that each organisation faces, I have designed the resource so it can be used by a range of organisations, from small, local clubs, to larger governing bodies, as well as individual athletes looking to take action. Organisations can use the filters to quickly find information and ideas that are relevant to them, as well as enabling them to filter the actions by the level of (estimated) cost and resource / effort required.
- Where can I access the resource?** Please access the resource (in Google Sheet format) [here](#).
- Can I contribute ideas or suggestions?** Absolutely! My hope is that this will continue to be a living document that grows as more organisations want to share what they are doing in the hope of inspiring others. If you have suggestions or ideas to contribute, please get in touch – rachael238@hotmail.com.
- Important to note:** This is not intended to be a step-by-step guide to environmental sustainability for sports organisations. This is a starting point for ideas; some which will be relevant to your sport / organisation, some which may not be. As you will see, many of the actions listed do not have too much detail provided, this is to ensure that the actions are as relevant to as many audiences as possible. However, where possible, examples of best practice / case studies have been included, along with links to find out more information. It is important to note that the ideas listed in this resource are focused on the environmental aspect of sustainability. Whilst this resource focuses primarily on this particular area of sustainability, it is crucial that this is seen as just one part of the wider sustainability agenda, which includes social, governance and economic sustainability.

#	Area	Action	Audience	Effort	Cost	Case Study
1	Education & Communication	Establish a dedicated 'Environmental Sustainability / Climate Action' section on your website where your members (e.g. athletes, fans, clubs, events organising committees etc.) can easily access educational materials, case studies, practical advice and ideas for action.	Local Clubs Small - Medium Governing Bodies Large Governing Bodies	L2	L1	World Rowing are developing a toolkit for their Member Federations and E
2	Strategy & Policy	Demonstrate your organisation's commitment to biodiversity by becoming a signatory of the IUCN Sports for Nature Framework	Local Clubs Small - Medium Governing Bodies Large Governing Bodies	L2	L1	Sports for Nature is a joint initiative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Union for Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) — to accelerate and inspire others to take action for nature.
3	Strategy & Policy	Pledge your organisation's commitment to tackling climate change by signing the UN Sports for Climate Action Framework	Small - Medium Governing Bodies Large Governing Bodies	L2	L1	The Sports for Climate Action Initiative provides sports organisations with a framework, developing new tools, and collaborating on areas of mutual interest and mainstream them within the sports community, thus setting the stage for World Rowing measure and report all of the greenhouse gas emissions related to their operations.
4	Energy	Measure and report your organisation's emissions (Scope 1, 2 & 3)	Local Clubs Small - Medium Governing Bodies Large Governing Bodies	L2	L2	World Triathlon is firmly dedicated to ensuring the accountable and credible data-driven approach that renders sustainability tangible, quantifiable, and
5	Energy	Develop a plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions	Local Clubs Small - Medium Governing Bodies Large Governing Bodies	L2	L1	World Rowing have developed a Climate Action Plan (CAP) which focuses
6	Strategy & Policy	If your organisation hosts events, ensure that sustainability is a key part of bid requirements and subsequently, the event delivery plan	Small - Medium Governing Bodies Large Governing Bodies	L3	L1	World Triathlon have created a Sustainable Event Guide for Event Organisers World Rowing's event hosting requirements and bid documents are reviewed
7	Strategy & Policy	Create a knowledge sharing platform for the local organising committees of your events to share practical ideas, tips and examples of best practice as the competitions move from one venue to another	Large Governing Bodies	L2	L1	World Rowing host online webinars, providing a platform for Organising Committee (OC) sustainability (part developed by the organising committee for the 2024 No
8	Community & Partnerships	Develop a grant scheme to support clubs to take action in their local area	Small - Medium Governing Bodies Large Governing Bodies	L2	L2	The European Clubs Association host webinars on sustainability, in partnership with the British Rowing launched the Tilting Waters Scheme which invites local clubs to apply for grants to support their sustainability. The scheme provides local clubs with access to all or some of the funding required, expert advice through T

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