

BASIS

One World – One Team – One Chance

Sustainability, Resilience and an Opportunity for Change

A ten-point plan for how the British sport and physical activity sector can Build Back Better for a more resilient, more sustainable future

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BASIS background and services

BASIS (The British Association for Sustainable Sport) was founded in 2011 and is the sustainability hub for sport in Great Britain. We believe a sustainable sport sector can help to build a better future for all, and we are committed to empowering sport in the UK to become a world leader in sustainability, with the urgency dictated by science.

BASIS provides:

- A central resource of expertise and knowledge available to all British sports bodies, clubs and venues;
- A single point of contact for media, regulators and policy makers;
- A bespoke, sport-specific framework for management, assessment and certification of sports clubs and venues of all sizes, from recreational clubs to national stadia, to assess their overall sustainability performance;
- sport-specific training, including a course in the [Fundamentals of Sustainability for Sport Organisations](#) addressing sustainability issues, current impacts, and actions that can be taken;
- A central service to quantify, analyse and assess the sustainability performance of the British sport sector and the improvements made by following the BASIS ten-point plan.

One World – One Team – One Chance: A call to action for sport and sustainability

The One World – One Team – One Chance approach is a call to action for the sport sector to recognise that the way we live and conduct our business now is causing damage to the natural world and the ecosystem services that all human activities ultimately rely on, including sport. We have just One World, but we are living beyond its means. If we come together as One Team, we may still have One Chance to avoid the worst of the climate and ecological crises predicted by the best scientific evidence.

Sustainability can appear to be complex. While BASIS acknowledges and supports frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, we simplify our approach to the theme of health, brought so sharply into focus by the recent, and (at the time of writing) ongoing, global COVID-19 pandemic.

Strictly, the One Health approach advocated by the World Health Organisation and others¹, seeks optimal health outcomes recognising the interconnections between people, animals and plants and the environment. The BASIS approach to sustainability adapts this slightly to take a holistic, scalable approach to address personal health, community health and planetary health within and through sport. In this way the health of the people coming to your venue or participating in your sport is linked to the health of your local community and local economy, of which you are part. In turn, these relationships scale up to link to your impacts on the environment.

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¹ World Health Organisation <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/one-health>
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/basics/index.html>

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic, and resulting lockdown, has had a substantial impact on the sport and physical activity sector. While the pandemic has been, itself, a grave crisis, it serves as a profound warning of the damage that major systemic disruption can do. Climate change and biodiversity loss carries the threat of long-term systemic disruption and yet, with a few notable exceptions, there is little evidence, so far, of the sport and physical activity sector taking a clear stance on climate change and other damaging sustainability issues.

From June to November 2020 BASIS sought views on the sport and physical activity sector's approach to sustainability and whether the sector could, and should, grasp the opportunity to build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic in a more resilient and environmentally sustainable way. The results reveal a sector that yearns to change, innovate and improve but lacks the systematic knowledge, resources and co-ordinated leadership to do so. The sport and physical activity sector increasingly understands the opportunity, responsibility and necessity of rising to the environmental challenge, but it is a sector in which sustainability and climate change have not yet become corporate priorities.

A follow up study, conducted in the summer of 2021, reinforced the findings of the initial consultation. In addition, 93% of respondents felt that sustainability issues should be included in the Code for Sport Governance while 90% felt that the British sport and physical activity sector should speak with one voice on sustainability issues.

This report provides a high-level policy response to the findings of the survey in the form of a ten-point plan for how British sport can build back better for a more resilient, more sustainable future. The commitments address identified gaps in co-ordinated leadership; knowledge and understanding; and measurement and verification of sustainability performance. The recommendations primarily call for changes to funding, governance and the assessment of risk for the sector. Together, the ten-point plan forms a foundation on which to build a collaborative, co-ordinated response for British the sport and physical activity sector to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The opportunities and the challenges lie across the sector. This report will give different things to different people. For policy and decision makers it will solidify the case for taking action and indicate the mechanisms for doing so. For operational managers it provides the context to adapt and improve sustainability performance. For volunteers at recreational clubs it highlights the importance of your response to your communities. Above all, it empowers a sector already united in its desire to build back better in a more healthy, resilient and sustainable way.

We have all of the tools we need to make British sport a world leader in sustainability and there is a collective desire and will to develop the strategy. The BASIS ten-point plan calls on British sport to lift its game and unite for One World, as One Team with, perhaps, just One Chance.

BASIS offers the following commitments and recommendations.

BASIS commits to:

1. Convene and lead a representative coalition of organisations to promote a co-ordinated approach to sustainability in the British sport and physical activity sector.
2. Develop guidance, support and specialist consultancy for executive managers and operational staff in clubs, venues and governing bodies, including to support organisations in the implementation of new ESG requirements contained in the revised Code for Sports Governance.
3. Provide sustainability training throughout the British sport and physical activity sector to executives, operational managers, athletes and others, and to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and best practice sharing throughout the sector.
4. Set and communicate clear sustainability principles, practices and targets for clubs, venues and governing bodies to measure and monitor their performance against and to provide a mechanism to verify, certify and report on progress.
5. Advocate for the sport and physical activity sector in the development of national policy and legislation, and communicate new policies, legislation and guidance throughout the sector.

BASIS recommends:

6. A clear commitment for the UK to become the world leader in hosting sustainable major sporting events, with an explicit requirement to integrate sustainability performance into the bidding, planning and delivery of all national, international and world championship events held in the UK.
7. A commitment to ensure that the new provision of the revised Code for Sports Governance to include environmental and societal impacts in decision making is adequately communicated, monitored and assessed.
8. BASIS recommends a comprehensive risk analysis assessing the sport and physical activity sector's vulnerability to climate change, biodiversity loss and other sustainability issues with sport-specific recommendations to significantly scale-up the resilience of our best-loved activities..
9. Specific support for the sport and physical activity sector to enable access to the National Infrastructure Bank to provide the capital funding required to introduce new large-scale improvements in operational efficiency and resilience.
10. National and local sport leadership bodies play a leading role in enabling sports and athletes to act on sustainability issues, including climate change, and ensure that the sport and physical activity sector significantly contributes to the UK's climate action commitments.

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit us hard. The scale of human tragedy, and political and economic turmoil, is without precedent in peacetime. It will take time and significant effort to recover but history tells us that we will recover and come through these difficult times to a new kind of normality.

The pandemic has been a grave crisis, but it also serves as a profound warning of the damage that major systemic disruption can do. Climate change and biodiversity loss carry the threat of long-term systemic disruption, with little prospect of a recovery; as some have said, you can neither vaccinate nor isolate against climate change.

The World Economic Forum's [Global Risks Report 2020](#) judged climate impacts, biodiversity loss and man-made natural disasters to be both more likely and more impactful than infectious diseases – a judgement made at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. [A year on](#) and, while infectious disease is considered the top short-term threat, biodiversity loss, natural resource crises and climate change rank highly as long-term existential threats to society and the natural world. The pandemic has distracted from the environmental challenge, not diminished it.

The sport and physical activity sector is exposed to the impacts of climate change while contributing to the problem. It can also play a significant, and genuine, role in the solution (see Insight 1).

Insight 1: Exposed to the problem, and part of the problem, but also a part of the solution

Exposed to the problem: *Unplayable pitches, eroding golf courses, failing snow and ice, extremes of heat, flooding, drought and devastating storms are already with us. These impacts are illustrated starkly in the powerful [Emergency on Planet Sport podcast series](#), which BASIS contributed to. These impacts will worsen. Unchecked, they threaten to overwhelm us and the sports that we love. Sport is also part of societies and economies that are vulnerable. Sponsors, suppliers, partners – and ultimately fans – are at the mercy of the disruptive power of climate change.*

Part of the problem: *Big venues and events create greenhouse gas emissions and waste; they use water and supply food; they bring thousands of people to a single place in modes of transport that, typically, require fossil fuels to be burned. International tours and global spectacles are laid on, often with their environmental footprint as an afterthought, if considered at all. Meanwhile amateur participation sport has a collective impact with the volume of travel and other resources that go to support competitive and recreational activities. As such sport contributes to the long-term environmental boomerang that is heading back our way.*

Part of the solution: *The contribution to the problem provides an opportunity for action. Exposure to the problem lends urgency to that action. Clearly, sport can not solve the climate and ecological crises, but sport holds a unique position in society to influence and reach millions of fans and participants with a genuine message of the threats to sport as we know it, and a call to action to respond in a way that only sport knows how.*

In politics, in business, in society, and in life, the damage and disruption of COVID-19 has left us with big choices to make about the future. The mayhem and risk faced by the sport and physical activity sector has brought the same choices into view with crystal clarity. We need to recover in a way that makes us more resilient to systemic shocks and challenges. Will the sector face the challenges posed by climate change now, by taking the opportunity to build back better from COVID-19 in a more sustainable and resilient way? Or will we fail to do that, ignoring the problem until we are in the crosshairs of another crisis, by which time it may be too late?

BASIS sought views on this from across sport at all levels. What follows is, in our judgement, the biggest and broadest sustainability survey ever conducted in British sport.

It reveals a sector that yearns to change, innovate and improve but lacks the systematic knowledge, resources and co-ordinated leadership to do so. It reveals a sector that increasingly understands the opportunity, responsibility and necessity of the environmental challenge, but in which sustainability and climate change have not yet become corporate priorities. It identifies some stand-out examples of sustainability excellence and leadership which, by definition, remain exceptional in a sector without a collective commitment or systematic approach. But the language and culture of sport is familiar with the concept of coming from behind for a win and so the sector is well positioned to catch up and to lead.

This year, the UK will host the United Nations Climate Change Summit (COP26). The negotiations will be a critical moment in the life of our planet, and ensuring their success is a solemn responsibility for the UK. Hosting these talks imposes a duty to lead by example on the whole nation. The sport and physical activity sector has the opportunity to join that national effort and take a leading position in the fight against climate change. Our task – and commitment – as BASIS is to fill the gaps identified by this consultation and facilitate real, tangible progress working with colleagues across the sport and physical activity sector. We present a ten-point plan, which includes five commitments from BASIS and five recommendations for the sector, to facilitate and to challenge it to move forward in a positive, more resilient and sustainable way.

2020 will be remembered for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on lives and on economies throughout the world. This year, 2021, will be remembered for two things: the emergence from the pandemic and our response to the climate and ecological crises, and the two are interlinked. Times of rapid change and great upheaval often foster opportunities with creative, far-reaching responses. Never have social awareness and political will come together with such strength over a common cause to Build Back Better.

The tide is rising. Whether it raises all boats, or sinks them, depends on what happens next. We may just have one more chance to get our response to the climate crisis right. The BASIS response calls on the British sport and physical activity sector to lift our game and to unite as One World, One Team with, perhaps, just One Chance.

We have work to do.

2. Sustainability in Sport

Sustainability issues are a legitimate concern for the sport and physical activity sector. Unfortunately the sector has been slow to respond to the increasing threats presented by the climate and ecological crises despite reports such as [Game Changer](#) and [Hit for Six](#) clearly demonstrating the range of impacts that are already being felt by multiple sports.

Plans to respond to impending threats should be standard for all organisations and sustainability issues should appear on the risk register of every club, venue and governing body with appropriate timescales and risk levels. It is simply good business to insure against future risk. Similarly, much in sustainability is about efficiency and using resources more economically, immediately bringing cost reductions. Of course, some projects need capital investment to bear fruit but, overall, being more sustainable is good business.

The UK Government has an obligation under the Climate Change Act 2008 (amended 2019) for the country to produce net zero emissions by 2050 and a wide ranging Environment Bill is progressing through Parliament at the time of writing. The Government published a ten-point plan for a Green Industrial Revolution in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. Legal obligations are only likely to increase moving forward.

The science is clear that definitive, urgent action must be taken to avoid the worst of the climate and ecological crises. The need to act is reflected in public opinion, with [81% of British people](#) recognising climate change as a global emergency and 93% of the participants in the [Climate Assembly UK](#) agreeing that government, employers and others should “take steps to encourage lifestyles to be more compatible with reaching net zero”. These members of the public will include fans and participants who support and play our sports; their opinions should count and be reflected in our actions.

3. The Consultation – summary of results

In June 2020, as a paralysed the sport and physical activity sector was feeling the full impact of the first COVID-19 lockdown in the UK, BASIS launched its consultation: The Role of Sport in Building Back Better. The purpose was to seek views about the need for a resilient, sustainable recovery from COVID-19 for the sport and physical activity sector, the contribution it can make to the broader national recovery and what it needs from the government, and other agencies (including BASIS), to enable the sector’s best contribution. The consultation remained open until November 2020. This section presents a summary of the results of the consultation survey².

A wide range of respondents³

A diverse group responded to the survey, from clubs and venues to athletes and from international federations to academics (Fig. 1). More than half of responses came from governing bodies, professional clubs and venues and suppliers to the sector.

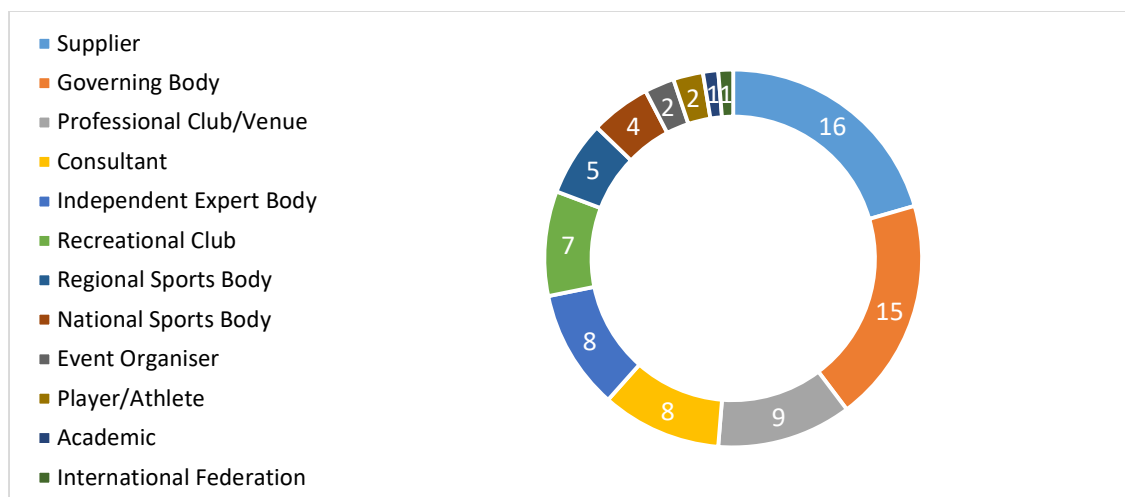


Figure 1: The survey attracted a wide range of respondents with more than half coming from national governing bodies, professional clubs and venues and suppliers to the sport sector.

Strong Support for Sustainability in Sport ⁴

There was unanimous support that the sector should take action to make operations more sustainable. The depth and breadth of support shows that the desire to improve sustainability performance cuts through a significant cross-section of the British sport and physical activity sector.

² Detailed responses are available in the appendix.

³ See Appendix Q1. About you.

⁴ See Appendix Q8. To what extent do you support the opportunity to make our operations more sustainable?

Essential to Build Back Better from COVID⁵

Nearly everyone agreed that “the sport sector should build back from the COVID 19 pandemic in a more resilient and environmentally sustainable way with a co-ordinated response”. The most common themes were that we have the opportunity and the responsibility and there is the necessity to make changes (see Insight 2). There was also recognition that there is a growing expectation and desire from the general public for a more sustainable approach⁶. In the context of the sport and physical activity sector, this includes fans, spectators and participants.

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the infection-controlling lockdowns, have severely affected the sport and physical activity sector. It is possible and, perhaps, necessary to pull positives from the situation by bringing the sport and physical activity sector together to ensure a more sustainable future and make it more resilient to the systemic shocks made more likely by climate change and biodiversity loss. Any co-ordinated approach must recognise and reward improved sustainability performance across the sector. It must also allay financial concerns by demonstrating that improved sustainability performance need not be more expensive, and is likely to reduce costs.

There is clear recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic has to be a turning point. There is a strong call for co-ordinated action in the sector that is backed by regional and national sports bodies, and also by government. **BASIS commits to convene and lead a representative coalition of organisations to promote a co-ordinated approach to sustainability in the British sport and physical activity sector** including national governing bodies and sports councils as well as clubs and venues and other organisations in the sector.

BASIS recommends a clear commitment for the UK to become the world leader in hosting sustainable major sporting events, with an explicit requirement to integrate sustainability performance into the bidding, planning and delivery of all national, international and world championship events held in the UK.

Insight 2: Selected reasons why the sport sector should build back better from COVID-19 in a more resilient and sustainable way

Opportunity

- *It's an opportunity to come back with sustainability at the forefront of our minds, it's a time when [old] habits can be forgotten and change can be brought in without difficult transition.*
- *People in sport have a huge opportunity and the profile to share and promote positive actions and to create learning opportunities, pathways and partnerships that can make a real, tangible difference.*
- *We've been provided with an opportunity to rethink and restart sport ... By working as a collective, we can drive greater learning, knowledge and change across the sector.*

Responsibility

⁵ See Appendix Q7. Do you agree that the sport sector should build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic in a more resilient and environmentally sustainable way with a co-ordinated response?

⁶ The “[People's Climate Vote](#)” polled 1.22 million people globally. 64% said that climate change is now an emergency. This figure rose to 81% in the UK.

- *Sport is right at the heart of community. The community needs to be aware of the impacts of climate change. Therefore, sport has a role in engaging the wider community in the quest for sustainable future and environmental health.*
- *There is a climate emergency and we should all be challenging ourselves to be more responsible for our future*
- *Every person and organisation in the world has a role to play, and a responsibility, towards climate action - the sport industry is no exception.*

Necessity

- *If sustainability across all its aspects is not considered in building back from COVID-19 then we will be back to square one as a sector. It is imperative we do our bit to recover in a sustainable way.*
- *This is a unique opportunity to re-set and challenge existing practices. There is an expectation from athletes and the public that we operate in a more sustainable manner.*
- *The pandemic has shone a light on the connection between planetary health and human health. Sport occupies a fairly unique intersection between health, well-being, [and] environment ... - it simply makes sense to future proof organisations.*

The sport and physical activity sector is feeling impacts of climate change⁷

Nearly three quarters of respondents felt that their organisation had already been affected by climate change (Fig. 2). This reinforces the findings of earlier reports (including [Game Changer](#) and [Hit for Six](#)) and demonstrates that, for the sport and physical activity sector, the threats of climate change, and other sustainability impacts, are real and present; they are not issues for the future. The sector is exposed and needs to take action.

But – many do not include sustainability issues in their risk assessments and most do not discuss sustainability at Board level⁸

However, despite these realised impacts and the immediate threats, nearly one-third of respondents said that their organisations have not included sustainability threats in their risk analyses moving forward (Fig. 2). Similarly, fewer than half of respondents say that their organisation regularly discusses these issues at Board level, with nearly one in twelve not discussing these issues at all (Fig. 2).

Climate disruption and other sustainability issues are now established critical risks. Failure to include them in organisational risk assessment exposes the sector to clear and present threats and leaves it out of step with most other sectors. Sustainability issues, risks and threats need to be hardwired into every conversation and all decisions. Lack of meaningful conversations at Board level across half the sector is a significant and avoidable gap that needs to be addressed.

BASIS commits to developing guidance, support and specialist consultancy for executive managers and operational staff in clubs, venues and governing bodies,

⁷ See Appendix Q3. Has your organisation already felt the impacts of climate change?

⁸ See Appendix Q4. Have you included sustainability issues (including climate change) in your risk assessment? and Q6. Where do you talk about sustainability issues in your organisation?

including to support organisations in the implementation of new ESG requirements contained in the revised Code for Sports Governance.

BASIS recommends a commitment to ensure that the new provision of the revised Code for Sports Governance to include environmental and societal impacts in decision making is adequately communicated, monitored and assessed

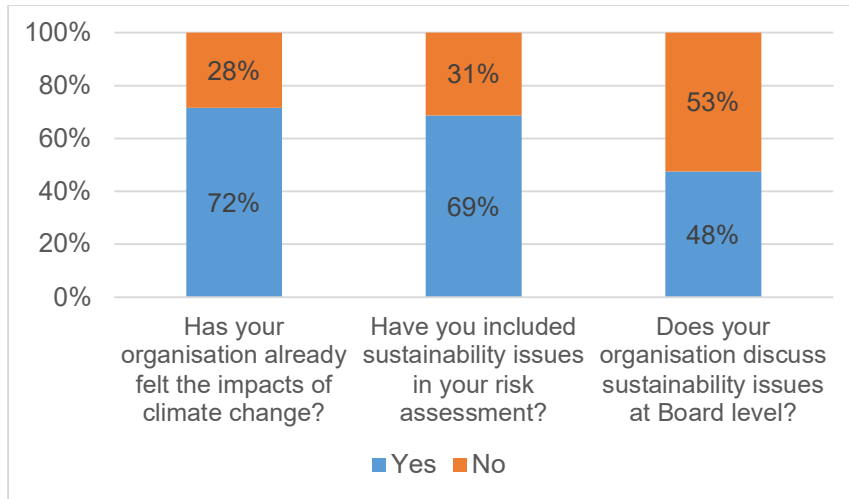


Figure 2: The proportion of respondents that have already felt the effects of climate change, the proportion who recognise climate change in their risk analysis and the proportion that discuss climate change risks at Board level.

Diverse range of issues recognised as relevant⁹

The sector recognises that sustainability goes well beyond core operations to a range of issues with most respondents recognising a wide array of social, economic and environmental issues as being relevant to their organisation.

This demonstrates a clear understanding from the sector that sport is a confluence of many other sectors, including hospitality, energy and water use, transport, waste management, and cleaning, among others. Many sports clubs, both professional and amateur, as well as recreational sport and physical activity hubs, act as focal points for communities of all sizes and can promote health and wellbeing, education and local economies, as well as fulfilling obligations on accessibility and equality. As such, the sector has a broad reach and a significant role to play in our societies at all levels.

Sports are already active in some – but not all – of these areas¹⁰

While the sector recognises the importance of sustainability issues, and many are taking actions to improve performance, this snap shot of current activities shows that, even

⁹ See Appendix Q2. Which types of issues are relevant to our organisation?

¹⁰ See Appendix Q5. Which sustainability initiatives have you already undertaken?

where the respondent has recognised the fundamental issue as being relevant to their organisation, there are still significant gaps in taking action which must be filled (Fig. 3).

BASIS recommends a comprehensive risk analysis assessing the sport and physical activity sector’s vulnerability to climate change, biodiversity loss and other sustainability issues with sport-specific recommendations to significantly scale-up the resilience of our best-loved activities.

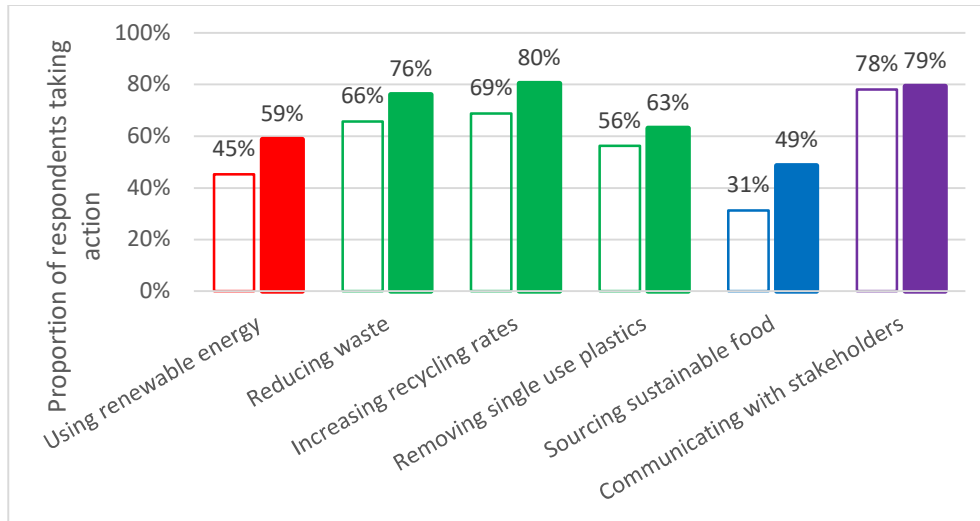


Figure 3: Proportion of respondents taking certain actions to improve sustainability performance. The open bars show the whole sample. The filled bars show the proportion of those that recognised certain issues as being relevant to their organisation. The red bars recognised “Energy and Emissions”; the green bars recognised “Waste and Recycling”; the blue recognised “Food and Beverage”; and the purple recognised Engagement and Education” as being relevant to their organisation.

The barriers are surmountable and the solutions are deliverable¹¹

The identified barriers, including perceived cost and a lack of knowledge of the issues and the options available, are all surmountable with a co-ordinated, sector-wide approach (see Insight 3). We have all the tools we need to make the British sport and physical activity sector a world leader in sustainability and there is a desire and will to develop the strategy.

More than half of respondents indicated that increased knowledge and awareness would help them to improve their sustainability performance. This generally took the form of formal training and education programmes, but increasing awareness through informal information sharing networks and case studies was also mentioned. To address this need **BASIS commits to provide sustainability training throughout the British sport and physical activity sector to executives, operational managers, athletes and others, and to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and best practice sharing throughout the sector.**

¹¹ See Appendix Q9. What is the biggest barrier to you changing your operations to be more sustainable? and Q10. What assistance do you feel your organisation needs to improve its sustainability performance?

In addition, to ensure continuously improving performance **BASIS commits to set and communicate clear sustainability principles, practices and targets for clubs, venues and governing bodies to measure and monitor their performance against and to provide a mechanism to verify, certify and report on progress.**

Many respondents wanted access to funding to implement more sustainable practices. Other priorities were non-financial incentives and changes to government policy or legislation. Finally, sectoral leadership and direction was a recognised priority, with some encouraging the essential role of BASIS in co-ordinating the response. **BASIS commits to advocate for the sport and physical activity sector in the development of national policy and legislation, and communicate new policies, legislation and guidance throughout the sector.**

BASIS recommends specific support for the sport and physical activity sector to enable access to the National Infrastructure Bank to provide the capital funding required to introduce new large-scale improvements in operational efficiency and resilience.

BASIS recommends National and local sport leadership bodies play a leading role in enabling sports and athletes to act on sustainability issues, including climate change, and ensure that the sport and physical activity sector significantly contributes to the UK's climate action commitments

Insight 3: Selected identified solutions

Knowledge

- *Guidance from BASIS on what we can do for all types of size organisation.*
- *Training is imperative ... to drive this agenda.*
- *Training - user friendly information for staff to embed sustainability, and information for us to share with our fans too.*

Funding

- *Governing Body, Government, Sport England and third party financial support.*
- *BASIS support, external funding sources.*
- *More funding and more advisory sources where all industries including sport can share initiatives.*

Incentives

- *Guidance and incentives would be really beneficial.*
- *Guidance, advice and templates along with incentives assistance where there is a major financial impact.*

Policy

- *Government policy, changes to regulations, funding for environmental and sustainable initiatives, penalties for non-action.*
- *Clarity and long-term commitment at Govt [sic] level so that business and individuals can plan and develop within a reliable framework that uplifts and rewards (rather than punishes).*

Leadership

- *The support of BASIS would be great as their knowledge of that sector would be really valuable.*
- *Clear messages from BASIS who have the gravitas to be a beacon for good practice.*
- *Advocacy that the sport industry MUST do better on this front, it's a part of doing good business, as important as any other factor!*

4. A ten-point plan for a sustainable sport and physical activity sector in the UK

This consultation has demonstrated that the British sport and physical activity sector sees the opportunity to come back from the imposed COVID-19 restrictions more resilient to future shocks and more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. Governments and industries worldwide are formulating 'green' response plans to ensure that the recovery from the pandemic takes us on a path to a cleaner, greener future.

In many ways, sport and physical activity is central to society, but it also reflects society. Throughout lockdown, while incomes have been decimated and fans and participants have been desperate to watch and to play, society has responded by changing the way we act, the way we buy and our aspirations for the future. As a minimum the sector should reflect this, and clubs and venues will benefit directly from making changes. But sport has a uniquely powerful opportunity to influence fans and participants and so can lead and make changes that multiply out, through fans and players, to have a far bigger impact than the summed footprint of individual clubs.

In the UK, the Prime Minister published his plan for a green recovery¹² in November 2020, backed by a £100bn National Infrastructure Strategy¹³ published alongside the Comprehensive Spending Review¹⁴. The Energy White Paper¹⁵ that followed made the clear and unambiguous commitment that wind and solar energy will be the backbone of the UK energy system by the end of the decade, with the phase out of new petrol and diesel cars on UK roads within the same timeframe. The same White Paper kick-started a process of consultation and policy development that will shape the UK's pathway to a Net Zero economy. The sport and physical activity sector has a real role to play on this pathway.

This report has presented the results of the most comprehensive and wide-ranging survey of sustainability in the British sport and physical activity sector. It identifies a sector that has been hurt by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, but that is ready to Build Back Better to insure against future systemic shocks. This report identifies the actions that are needed. In the preceding sections we have identified five commitments and five recommendations that will allow the British sport and physical activity sector to recover from the pandemic in a co-ordinated way and to contribute to the national and global imperative of avoiding the worst impacts and systemic shocks of the climate and ecological crises.

These commitments and recommendations are summarised in the following ten-point plan. Individually each proposal will make a difference, but they are more powerful if undertaken as a linked programme with a central point of focus.

¹² [The Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution: Building back better, supporting green jobs, and accelerating our path to net zero.](#)

¹³ [National Infrastructure strategy. Fairer, faster greener.](#)

¹⁴ [HM Treasury Spending Review 2020](#)

¹⁵ [Energy White Paper. Powering our Net Zero Future](#)

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3. Provide sustainability training throughout the British sport and physical activity sector to executives, operational managers, athletes and others, and to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and best practice sharing throughout the sector.
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10. National and local sport leadership bodies play a leading role in enabling sports and athletes to act on sustainability issues, including climate change, and ensure that the sport and physical activity sector significantly contributes to the UK's climate action commitments.

5. Conclusion

The BASIS consultation demonstrated a clear desire from the sector to build back better in a more resilient and sustainable way, addressing environmental, economic and social issues with an integrated, coherent response avoiding future systemic shocks made more likely by the climate and ecological crises. Respondents recognised the responsibility, the opportunity, and the necessity to act and that the COVID-19 pandemic could, and should, be a turning point.

It was also recognised that a co-ordinated, sector-wide approach is needed. A follow up study, conducted the summer of 2010 in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh¹⁶ found that 93% of respondents felt that sustainability issues should be included in the revised Code for Sports Governance¹⁷ and that 90% felt that the British sport and physical activity sector should “speak with one voice on sustainability issues”, with more than half advocating an independent body to assist the sector.

In the year of the COP26 Climate Change negotiations, the profile of sport can provide access for messaging, and can inspire changes in hard-to-reach communities, where traditional government communications may not work.

A sustainable sport and physical activity sector can help to build a better, more resilient future for all. It will help the UK to demonstrate leadership and will contribute to the nation building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic with a confident, resilient green recovery with the sector playing its part in helping communicate this to the public in a real and tangible way. The BASIS ten-point plan provides the opportunity for the British sport and physical activity sector to become a world leader in sustainability, with the urgency dictated by the science.

BASIS comes from within the sector and recognises that it is essential to work across our diverse sector to make the necessary improvements. We have the tools we need to make British sport and physical activity a world leader in sustainability and it is apparent there is a collective desire and will to develop effective actions. The BASIS ten-point plan calls on British sports to lift their game and unite for One World, as One Team with One Chance. We are committed to action and ask the sport and physical activity sector colleagues to support the plan.

¹⁶ Full results are currently embargoed but will be released in due course.

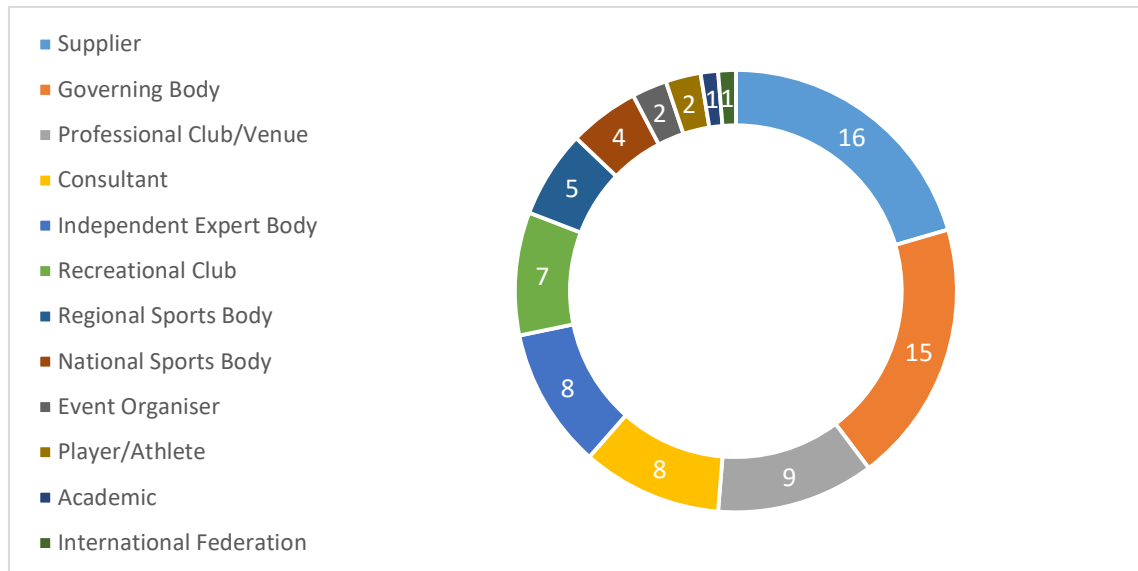
¹⁷ This research was conducted before the revised Code for Sports Governance was published.

Appendix 1: Summary of responses

Q1: About you

This question gathered data about the individual respondent, including contact information, and the organisation they represent. All responses throughout this report have been anonymised for analysis and presentation.

The survey received seventy-eight (78) unique responses from a range of organisations, classified here into twelve different groups. More than half of the responses came from governing bodies, professional clubs or venues and suppliers to the sector. 15% of respondents were current BASIS members.



Q2: Which type of issues are relevant to your organisation?

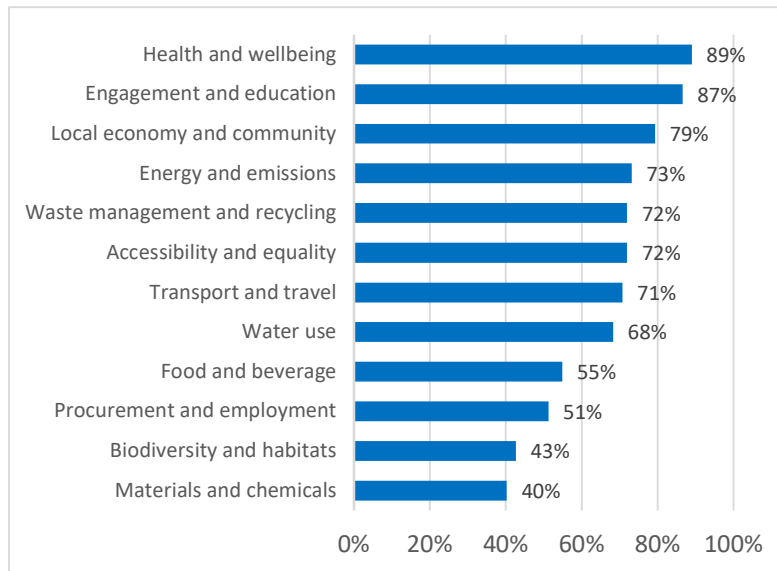
Twelve (12) issues were listed. Respondents could indicate as many as they felt were relevant to their organisation.

More than half of respondents recognise that at least nine of the twelve categories listed in the survey are relevant to their organisation and nearly one in six indicate that every category is relevant to them.

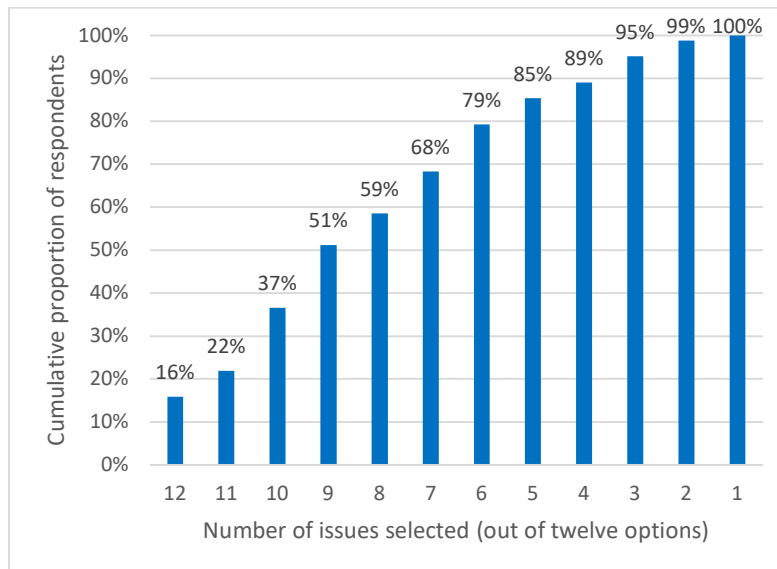
Areas where sport has been traditionally strong; engaging with local communities and health and wellbeing, are considered most relevant with close to 90% of respondents recognising their importance. Nearly three-quarters recognise high profile environmental issues including waste and recycling, energy and carbon emissions, transport and travel and water use, with a similar proportion recognising the importance of accessibility and

equality. Lower numbers, ranging from 40% to 55%, consider food and beverage, procurement and employment, biodiversity, and materials use to be relevant in their operations.

A sustainability strategy takes a holistic approach to managing operations across economic, environmental and social issues and so the objective is to push recognition of and participation in each category up to 100%.

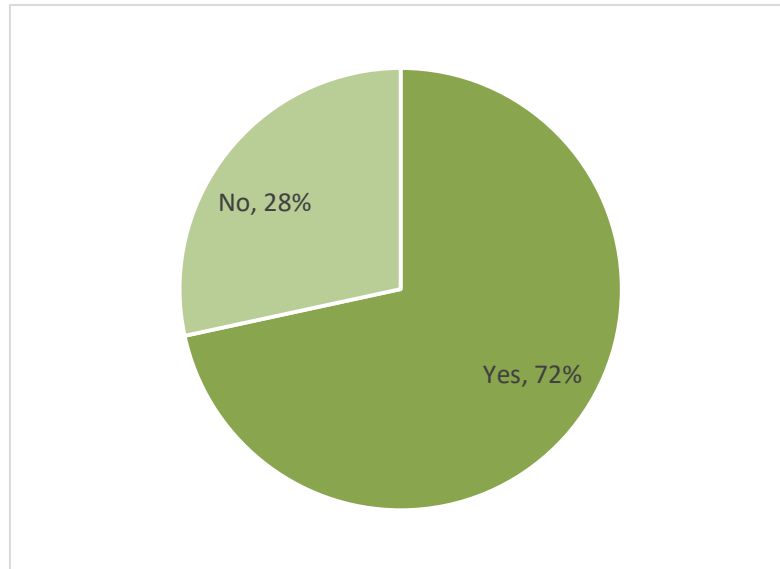


More than half (51%) indicated that nine or more of the issues are relevant to their organisation.



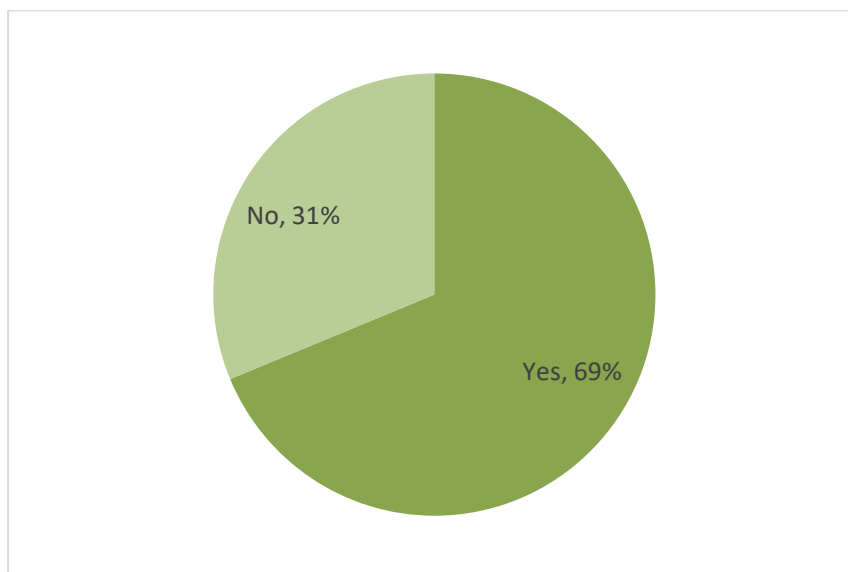
Q3: Has your organisation already felt the impacts of climate change?

Nearly three-quarters of organisations have already felt the impacts of climate change, whether through staff, players or visitors being affected by extreme heat; changes to turf or facility management due to drought, heat or flood; postponement of matches or practices; or any other weather related impacts.



Q4: Have you included sustainability issues (including climate change) in your risk assessment?

Nearly one-third of respondents said that their organisations have not included any sustainability threats in their risk analyses moving forward.



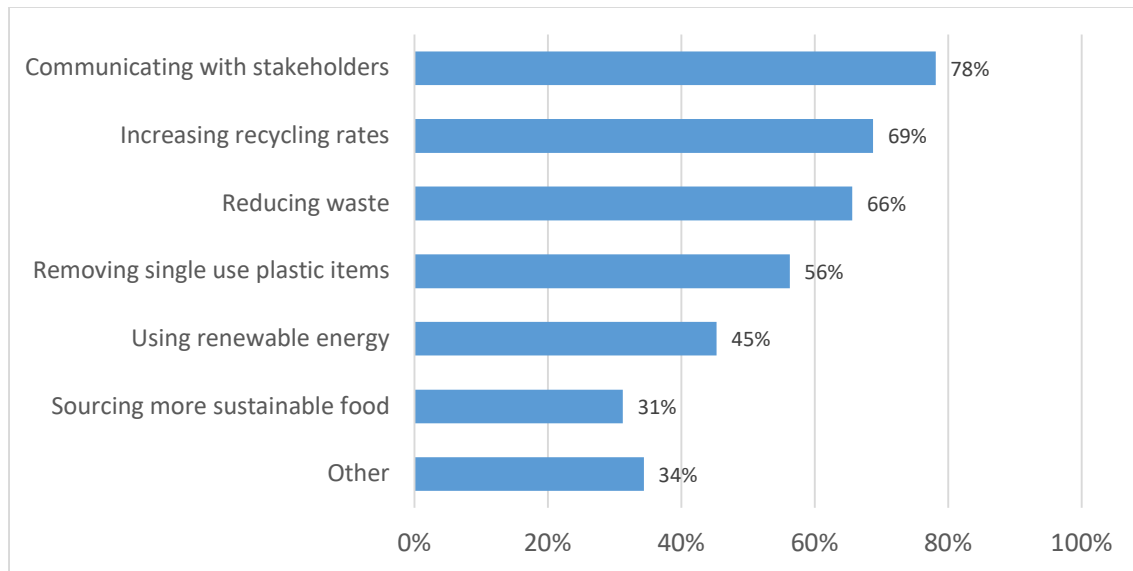
Q5: Which sustainability initiatives have you already undertaken?

Respondents could select from

- Using renewable energy;
- Reducing waste;
- Increasing recycling rates;
- Removing single use plastics;
- Sourcing sustainable food; and
- Communicating with stakeholders.

They could select more than one category.

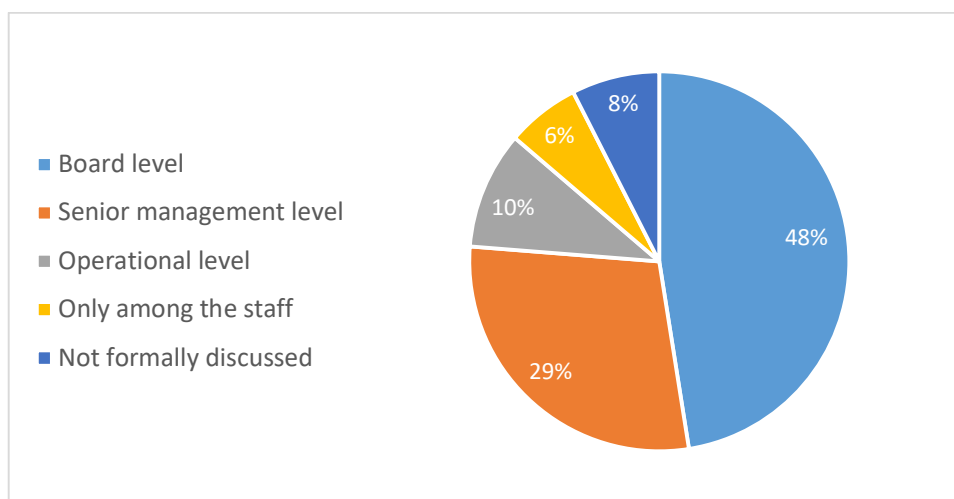
This snap shot of current activities shows that around two-thirds of respondents are taking action to reduce waste and increase their recycling rates, while just over half are addressing their use of single use plastics; an area where hygienic, reusable alternatives are becoming more readily available. However, fewer than half use renewable energy, a situation that is increasingly easy to remedy with no additional costs. Communicating with stakeholders is vital, but it may be telling that it scored higher than any operational, action-orientated initiative. There is an intriguing 34% of respondents that are already actively undertaking sustainability activities not captured in the offered categories; further investigation may offer options for the sharing of new or best practice.



Q6: Where do you talk about sustainability issues in your organisation?

Respondents selected the highest level where sustainability issues are regularly discussed in the organisation.

Just under half of organisations speak about sustainability at Board level, with nearly a third discussing at Senior Management level. One in twelve organisations do not discuss sustainability issues at all.



Q7: Do you agree that the sport sector should build back from the COVID-19 pandemic in a more resilient and environmentally sustainable way with a co-ordinated response? (Please indicate Yes or No, then explain why)

There was near unanimous support (77 of 78 respondents agreed) for the statement that “the sport sector should build back from the COVID 19 pandemic in a more resilient and environmentally sustainable way with a co-ordinated response”. The one respondent who did not indicate a clear position suggested that a more resilient, sustainable response might “be difficult due to financial pressures”.

Sixty-five respondents explained why they agreed with the statement. These free-text responses were reviewed by the first author and categorised according to the underlying theme of the message. Five categories were defined after reviewing the responses: Opportunity; Responsibility; Necessity; Other; and None. Where the specified word, or a derivative, was used the classification was clear. Otherwise the comment was subjectively assessed and placed in the most appropriate category according to its intent. Eight comments were classified into more than one category. Eighty per cent of these ‘free-text’ responses fell into three broad categories: opportunity, responsibility or necessity; some of these responses are listed below.

The themes identified in the “Other” category include:

- The need for, and the greater power of, a co-ordinated, scalable response across the British sport sector;
- Financial concerns mean that, for many, available capital may be in short supply. Respondents expressed concerns that implementing more sustainable practices may cost more and that ‘non-sustainable’ clubs and venues may be able to undercut those taking a more sustainable approach; and
- The growing expectation and desire from the general public for a more sustainable approach.

Opportunity

- Now is the time to look at all aspects of the business before we start rebuilding it.
- It is a real opportunity with the current level of public awareness to ensure that the sector is sustainable environmentally, socially and financially for the long term. We can't have a successful sector if we don't address all three aspects in order to protect our sports from increasing environmental extremes.
- Its [sic] an opportunity to come back with sustainability at the forefront of our minds, its [sic] a time when [old] habits can be forgotten and change can be brought in without difficult transition.
- There has been a natural 'pause' and we have been forced to review all procedures. It gives us a chance to review how we do everything.
- We have such a large platform from which we can reach so many people, internally and externally. This is a huge opportunity for us to educate and influence others too.
- People in sport have a huge opportunity and the profile to share and promote positive actions and to create learning opportunities, pathways and partnerships that can make a real, tangible difference - if properly thought out, such actions positively impact the bottom line, performance and reputation.
- We've been provided with an opportunity to rethink and restart sport - this should include how our events operate and the impact each one has. By working as a collective, we can drive greater learning, knowledge and change across the sector.
- It's a chance to reset expectations and not go back to the old way of doing things.

Responsibility

- We have a responsibility to deliver sport in a more sustainable way and a unique opportunity to lead the way for other sectors.
- Sport is right at the heart of community. The community needs to be aware of the impacts of climate change. Therefore, sport has a role in engaging the wider community in the quest for sustainable future and environmental health.
- We don't want to slip backwards in the momentum that sport was beginning to take - we need a strong consensus so that individual sports venues, no matter what scale, are supported in their operational decision making to continue on a path of improvement and sustainable best practice.
- There is a climate emergency and we should all be challenging ourselves to be more responsible for our future
- We have the power to influence millions of people and must use our platform to affect positive change.
- Because we must do our part as a sector.
- Every person and organisation in the world has a role to play, and a responsibility, towards climate action - the sport industry is no exception. We must do what we can to contribute, or at least to not exacerbate.

Necessity

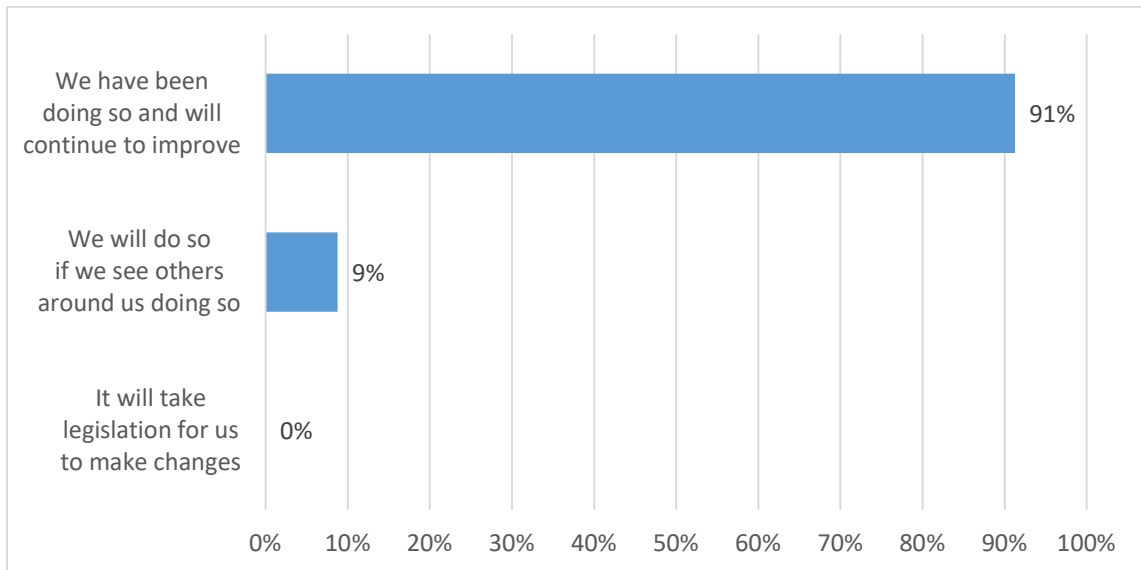
- There needs to be a more sustainable environment across the sporting sector - from professional to grass roots.

- Because sustainability is key to the success of sport and our resilience and our environment are fundamental, as they will challenge us more in years to come.
- While we need to be cautious immediately post-COVID to ensure safety of staff and guests are a priority, sustainability needs to follow.
- We have the power to influence millions of people and must use our platform to affect positive change.
- In the future, the sport sector needs to be more efficient and better prepared for the challenges ahead.
- You'd have to be insane ... to not understand the urgency and the need for everyone to play a part.
- It is the only way to operate and have any credibility.
- If sustainability across all its aspects is not considered in building back from COVID-19 then we will be back to square one as a sector. It is imperative we do our bit to recover in a sustainable way.
- This is a unique opportunity to re-set and challenge existing practices. There is an expectation from athletes and the public that we operate in a more sustainable manner.
- The pandemic has shone a light on the connection between planetary health and human health. Sport occupies a fairly unique intersection between health, well-being, environment ... - it simply makes sense to future proof organisations.

Q8: To what extent do you support the opportunity to make your operations more sustainable?

More than 90% of respondents are already taking some action and the remainder are willing to follow once the benefits of more sustainable practices have been demonstrated.

We are encouraged by the strength of support for sustainability across the sector. While BASIS members, and others, have been publicly active in reducing their impacts for some time, the depth and breadth of support shows that the desire to improve sustainability performance now cuts through a significant cross-section of sport from suppliers and consultants to national governing bodies and international federations. This is the clearest general expression of support for sustainability in British sport that we have ever seen.



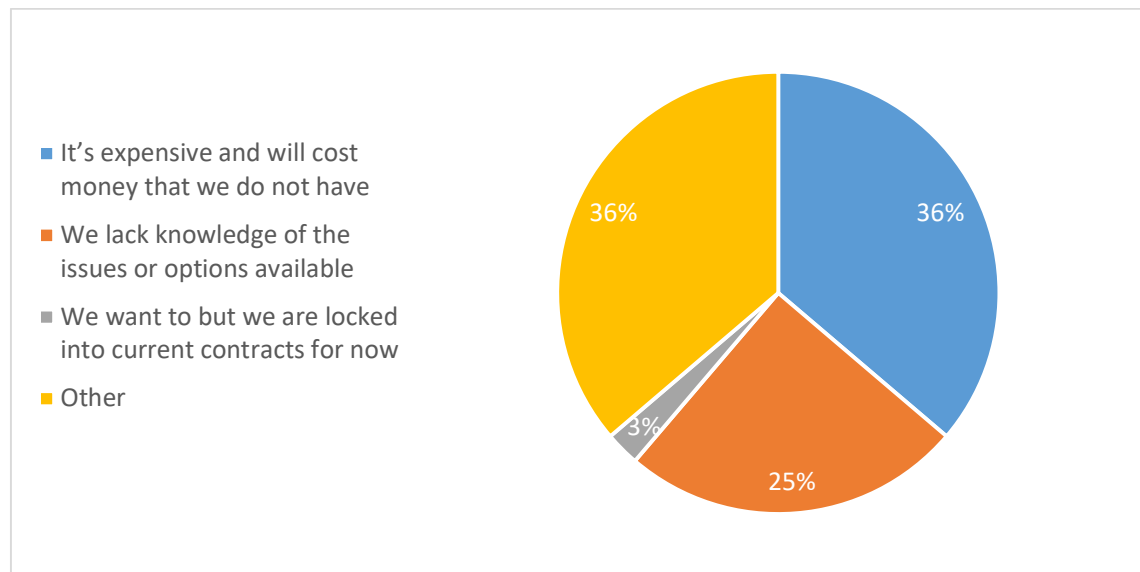
Q9: What is the biggest barrier to you changing your operations to be more sustainable?

Respondents could tick one category

A little over a third of respondents (36%) indicated that their biggest barrier to making their operations more sustainable is that they believe it will be expensive, requiring money that they do not have available in their budgets. At the current time, this is exacerbated by the impact of the lockdown reducing revenues to a fraction of operating costs and the need to spend money on necessary safety and hygiene requirements to ensure the safe return of staff, spectators, participants and other visitors.

The impediment for a quarter of respondents is a lack of knowledge of the issues and/or the options that are available to them. Only a few (3%) cited the practical difficulty of being locked into contracts such that they are not currently able to switch providers as their key blocker. Intriguingly, 36% cited another, unspecified, barrier to them improving performance. This requires further investigation.

Notwithstanding, the identified barriers are all surmountable with a co-ordinated, sector-wide approach. We have all the tools we need to make British sport a world leader in sustainability and there is a desire and will to develop the strategy.



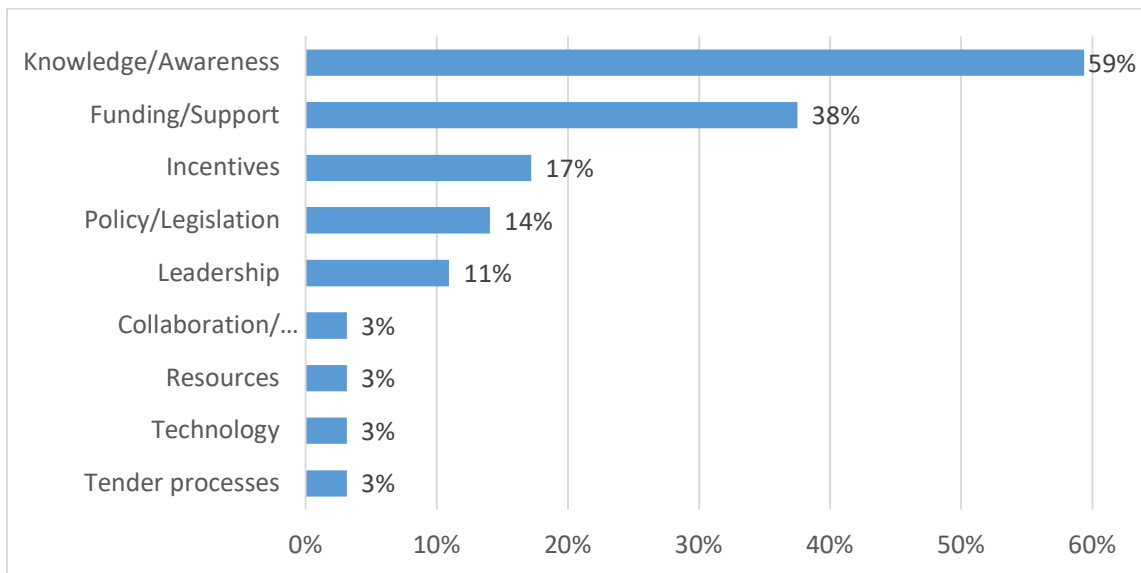
Q10: What assistance do you feel your organisation needs to improve its sustainability performance? If you think the support of BASIS, your peers, the government, extra training, external funding sources / incentives, or anything else would be helpful please reference them below.

This was a free-text response with the text categorised by the first author. The sixty-four free-text responses were reviewed by the authors and categorised according to the underlying theme of the message. Six categories were generated: Knowledge and Awareness; Funding and Support; Incentives; Government Policy and Legislation; Other; and None. Where the specified word, or a derivative, was used the classification was clear. Otherwise the comment was subjectively assessed and placed in the most appropriate category according to its intent. Twenty seven comments were classified into more than one category.

More than half of respondents (56%) indicated that increased knowledge and awareness would help them to improve their sustainability performance. This generally took the form of formal training and education programmes, but increasing general awareness through the sharing of information through informal networks and case studies was also mentioned.

Three in eight (37.5%) wanted access to some form of funding to implement more sustainable practices. Some sought other, non-financial incentives (17%) or government policy or legislation changes (14%). Leadership was a priority for 11% of respondents, with more than half of these encouraging the essential role of BASIS in co-ordinating the response.

The same number of respondents (n=2) cited co-ordinated collaboration and the opportunity to develop central buying power; access to resources and templates; the inclusion of sustainability performance standards in tender processes; and the use of technology to reduce impacts. A performance standard, similar to that provided in the BASIS management guidance was also suggested.



Here are some of the supporting comments:

Knowledge

- Guidance from BASIS on what we can do for all types of size organisation.
- Training is imperative ... to drive this agenda.
- Training - user friendly information for staff to embed sustainability, and information for us to share with our fans too.
- [We] would benefit from building our own knowledge and expertise in how to address this issue and [from] some external expert advice on this.
- Resources or training would be useful on how best to leverage senior thinking to sustainability at a time when there is economic pressure.
- Sports clients and especially funding providers need to be more aware of the environmental responsibilities and possibilities so that appropriate measures may be implemented.
- Knowledge that is explainable to the sport and its members in a way that they will understand and can apply.
- Easy to share info sources, both for the organization, and to share with customers so they can have at hand the info that guides our new choices.
- Greater understanding for event managers - what needs to change, the ease of doing this and the costs / cost savings.
- Training at the very top of the organisation. ... The only way forward is to engage the attention at the top and get the commitment to make change for good.

Funding

- Advice on how to track down grants to improve the club's ability to become carbon neutral.
- Governing Body, Government, Sport England and third party financial support.

- Training is imperative, as well as providing tangible funding support to drive this agenda.
- Central government directive and funding.
- Funding and advice.
- BASIS support, external funding sources.
- More funding and more advisory sources where all industries including sport can share initiatives.
- Unfortunately it comes down to money!
- I think external funding/incentives are key.

Incentives

- Government legislations. Incentives and fines.
- Guidance and incentives would be really beneficial.
- Guidance, advice and templates along with incentives assistance where there is a major financial impact.
- Clarity and long-term commitment at Govt [sic] level so that business and individuals can plan and develop within a reliable framework that uplifts and rewards (rather than punishes)

Policy

- Government policy, changes to regulations, funding for environmental and sustainable initiatives, penalties for non-action.
- Central government directive and funding.
- Government legislations. Incentives and fines.
- Clarity and long-term commitment at Govt [sic] level so that business and individuals can plan and develop within a reliable framework that uplifts and rewards (rather than punishes).

Leadership

- The support of BASIS would be great as their knowledge of that sector would be really valuable.
- Clear messages from BASIS who have the gravitas to be a beacon for good practice.
- Advocacy that the sport industry MUST do better on this front, it's a part of doing good business, as important as any other factor!
- Help and support from BASIS to build my organisation.