



**Morecambe  
Bay**  
Partnership



# Reducing Environmental Impacts of Outdoor Events

Morecambe Bay  
and Cumbria

[morecambebay.org.uk](http://morecambebay.org.uk)



# Contents

## 03 Morecambe Bay and Cumbria

Introduction.

## 04 The Problem

The global problem we face with the climate emergency, as well as plastic pollution and a biodiversity crisis.

## 05 What can you do?

As event organisers, practical changes you can make to become more environmentally responsible.

## 06 Make Positive Change

Through topics of: waste, energy, travel, food, biosecurity, merchandise and supply chain.

## 12 Stories

Events and organisations around Morecambe Bay and Cumbria who are passionate about being environmentally responsible.

## 17 Checklist

Use this page to check you have covered all bases with your event.

## 18 Find out more

Signposting to resources for more information on how to reduce environmental impact of your event, along with sources used for this resource.

# Morecambe Bay and Cumbria

**Morecambe Bay is special. It is the largest intertidal area in the UK where four estuaries join in a horseshoe-shaped bay of spectacular scale and grandeur.**

It is an elemental place where shining sands alternate with seascapes in the constant rhythm of the tide. Whether you live here or you're visiting, or even taking part in an outdoor challenge, the scale of the views lifts your spirits.

The Bay and Cumbria are internationally important wildlife sites. They include various designations including Ramsar, Site of Special

Scientific Interest and Special Protection Area, reflecting their importance as a biodiversity hotspot. The natural beauty of the landscape draws a great host of outdoor enthusiasts.

Morecambe Bay and the wider area attracts huge numbers of tourists which the local economy relies on.



**Over 60,000 people use the Bay Cycle Way, 70,000 people take part in Cross Bay Walks to raise money for charity and we welcome 18.1 million day trippers annually... It is imperative that outdoor events across Cumbria and Morecambe Bay are run responsibly.**

# The Problem

## We are living through a climate and ecological crisis.

**Millions of people all over the world are already affected. We're having more extreme and longer-lasting heatwaves, drought, storms, flooding, wildfires and other extreme weather across every continent.**

In the UK, current trends suggest our summers will become drier overall, but when rain falls, it will do so in heavier bursts.

On top of this, plastic pollution is drowning our oceans. Every year, between 8 and 13 million tonnes of plastic enter our ocean. It's estimated that 1.5 million tonnes of microplastics enter our ocean every year.

Approximately 1 million species already face extinction. In the past 50 years, the rate of change in nature is 'unprecedented' in human history.

## How does this impact the outdoor events community?

**As event organisers, the climate crisis will have direct implications on outdoor events.**

A less stable climate with more unpredictable and extreme weather poses huge risks to the stability of safely running outdoor events, particularly in Morecambe Bay and Cumbria with an already unpredictable climate. This extreme weather poses higher risks to participants' safety - the main priority of an event organiser.

For example, hotter weather and dry spells will increase risk of heatstroke for participants' and there's greater risk of fatalities and injuries if more flash floods occur.

This pack focuses predominantly on climate and plastic problems, as well as participant travel considerations, whilst also mentioning the ecological impact in terms of land use and where events take place.

## As an event organiser

According to Powerful Thinking's Industry Green Survey 2019, the three most common frustrations or barriers to action for event organisers are:

- Cost implications
- Lack of internal time to make changes or implement new practises
- Inability of contractors to deliver sustainable options

**“As event organisers, we have a unique opportunity to model the kind of world we want to see.”**

(Vision 2025, page 8 of The Show Must Go On report update)

# What can you do?

**This guide aims to support outdoor event organisers across Morecambe Bay and Cumbria to provide useful advise, tips, information and signpost to further guidance on how to reduce the environmental impact of your event.**

Over the next few pages you will find how to make positive change within your outdoor event along

with examples of how other events have made changes to reduce their environmental impact.

This guide is also for participants who want to learn more about what events can do to make events they take part in more responsible, or pass this information on to event organisers.

# Make Positive Change

As an event organiser, having to consider changes to your event on top of an already busy schedule and ever-growing to-do list can feel overwhelming. This section focuses on ways to help make those small steps towards more responsible outdoor events.

## Waste

### Problems with waste

When we throw things away, it hides the supply chain behind the waste: extracting raw materials, refining, transporting then manufacturing into products. This uses energy, creates emissions and causes pollution at each step.

The creation of waste which can neither be recovered or reused indicates that we are using the wrong materials. Overall we need to use and consume less. Waste is one of the biggest and physically obvious challenges for outdoor events.

## Energy

### Problems with energy

Our dependency on fossil fuels for providing electricity is a key cause of climate change.

This requires a change of thinking for the outdoor events industry in terms of energy management practises. The main priority for outdoor events organisers wanting to cut their emissions from their use of power is to reduce dependency on diesel generators.

### Approaches that can help reduce waste at outdoor events:

- **Re-use:** move away from single use disposable materials to reusable items, the most obvious example being reusable cups. This can also apply to swim caps and race numbers.
- **Reduce:** Work with contractors to limit the number of items and materials introduced into waste streams. Set clear material requirements for commonly used disposables.
- **Recycle:** Provide clearly signed bin systems for segregating materials at source (for participants and staff). Set recycling targets for your outdoor event.
- Engage with your participants about your waste process and motivation to recycle more through campaigns and communications from the moment they sign up to your event. This will encourage positive changes in behaviour at events.



A note on plastic - Banning plastic is not the silver bullet answer. Replacing a single use plastic item with another type of single use disposable item isn't good practice. Instead, focusing on reducing waste as a whole and having less disposable items, and more reusable, is best.

### Approaches to help with reducing energy use at events:

- Ask yourself: Do you really need power in this location? Can you use mains electricity instead of a generator? Can you use renewables? Can you use HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil, a low carbon replacement to diesel) or other sustainable fuels and hybrids incorporated?
- Monitor your energy use, including a minimum standard data collection, including: fuel consumption per generator per day, run time hours, kWhs, so you can be transparent and look back on this data as a reference.
- You can find more useful information including The Power Management Hierarchy and breakdowns of energy types in the Show Must Go On Report Update (2020) by following the link on page 19.

## Food

### Problems with food

Emissions are produced at each stage of food production, from the way land is managed, emissions from crops, livestock and fertilisers, to processing, storage, packaging, transport, retail and then waste. Food can be a highlight for outdoor event participants, whether it's at the aid station or post-race, so it's important to consider how the carbon footprint of food at your event can be reduced.

### Approaches to reduce the impact of food and food waste:

- Reducing amount of surplus food is a big way to help reduce food as an impact. Gathering information from participants before the event can help prevent over-supply.
- If surplus foods are leftover, consider working with local food charities to redistribute salvageable food. Waste Into Wellbeing is one organisation that accepts food donations from businesses (see page 18 for link).
- Alternatively, look into the feasibility of recycling unsalvageable food via composting or to be used as animal feed.
- Make sure provided foods meet relevant sourcing standards and certification, for example: free range eggs, Fairtrade products, Soil Association certified and locally sourced, seasonal produce (note that sourcing locally doesn't always mean lower emissions).
- Consider reducing meat options at your event.



Photo © Steve Barber



## Travel

### Problems with travel

One of the biggest contributors to carbon emissions at outdoor events is participant travel. With some outdoor events across Morecambe Bay and Cumbria taking place in remote options, public transport isn't always an option. But there are alternative ways to reduce the carbon footprint of travel at your event.

### Approaches to help reduce travel emissions to your event:

- Collect travel data from your participants via surveys or simple postcode data.
- Increase car occupancy and limit number of cars. Utilise 'Race Lift' website so participants can vehicle share to your event (see page 18 for link).
- Increase public transport options to your event: consider a park and ride option or hiring a bus service.
- Create incentives for greener travel to the event, for example, if participants have walked or cycled to your event, they get a reduced race entry.
- Consider subsidising tickets and other benefits for local residents.
- Spread supportive messages for greener transport within your marketing and communications.
- As a last option, offer audiences the option to offset their carbon emissions from travel. Offsetting will not solve the climate emergency and should be viewed as a last resort. It's also important to use responsible offsetting organisations, for example Ecolibrium (link on page 19).

## Biosecurity

- Invasive non-native species (INNS) are animals or plants which have not colonised naturally, but have been introduced (accidentally or deliberately) by people and could now pose a threat to the environment.
- Freshwater INNS are able to 'hitchhike' on our equipment, footwear, clothing and boats. When we move to a new river, tarn or lake, a species may be transferred and may become established, often having devastating effects. INNS can cause severe disruption to native plants and destabilise precious ecosystems.
- Biosecurity means taking action in order to minimise the introduction or spread of invasive non-native species and diseases.



### How can event organisers help prevent the spread of Invasive Non Native Species?

- Before the event, ask participants to check sports equipment (e.g. wetsuits, running shoes, paddle boards) is clean and dry before travelling to the event.
- During the event, have cleaning stations for participants to wash their sports equipment.
- After the event, 'check, clean, dry':
  - Check** - Check all equipment for living organisms, particularly areas that are damp or hard to inspect.
  - Clean** - Clean and wash all equipment with tap water. Make sure washing water isn't going to enter drainage system or watercourse.
  - Dry** - Equipment needs to be dry before next use (some species can live for multiple days in damp conditions).

## Race Freebies

It's common to want to thank participants for taking part in your event and to celebrate their achievement. This usually comes in the form of race 'freebies' - for example, race T-Shirts, medals and other goodies.

### Here are some things to consider when creating your race goody bag:

- For items like race T-shirts, medals, event packs - use non-plastic, local or recycled materials - rather than virgin resources.
- Trophies and gifts should be sourced from local artists or producers.
- Have the option for participants to opt out of having a T-shirt and instead support an environmental cause, for example planting a tree (See Trees Not Tees link on page 18).
- Minimise the production of printed materials - use digital alternatives for communicating and advertising.
- If T-shirts are made, they should be from certified recycled polyester or organic materials.
- The race goody bag itself should not be plastic. Instead, use a cloth, mesh, or another easily reused material.

More information on this can be found at [Outdoor Friendly Pledge](#).

## Supply Chain

The supply chain of your event ties into all the themes previously mentioned, but a focus on this area felt important. The supply chain is the thread that intertwines all event logistics: it affects how the event is run - from the planning stages all the way through to after the event when you're collecting feedback from participants.

The main consideration when working with suppliers is to see if you can encourage more environmental responsibility within their sphere (or work with those who already have this in mind!).

### Questions to consider are:

- Do the suppliers you work with have an environmental policy in place?
- Do they have a recognised green accreditation, for example 'B corp' status?
- Do the sponsors you are working with have a strong ethos on environmental responsibility?

If your current suppliers are unwilling to factor in environmental matters, consider going elsewhere.

# Stories



Click or scan to view online  
[bay-limestone-round.org.uk](http://bay-limestone-round.org.uk)

## Bay Limestone Round

**The Bay Limestone Round is a 55-mile trail running route that covers 13 summits around Morecambe Bay. It starts at Kents Bank and finishes at Arnside.**

The founder, Tom Phillips, created this challenge in 2020. Individuals who take on this challenge are encouraged to choose a charity to fundraise for whilst undertaking the ultra-run.

There is a huge focus on environmental responsibility for this challenge, with lots of useful information on their website.

Tom says “Leading by example is the best way of changing things for the future. The environments that we use are actually quite fragile and so leaving them as we find them (reducing erosion for example) is really important.

I made small route changes to avoid paths that would potentially erode with increased footfall. The start of the running challenge was chosen to allow runners to use the railway line across the Bay - it’s only a 10 minute train journey from Arnside to Kents Bank, so it works really well. To date most people have used the train to get to the start. Quite a few runners have completed the whole 55 mile running challenge without the use of cars.”

**Top Tip: Start collecting data from your event. For example, start asking participants where they travel from and what transport they use to get to your event. Use this data as a baseline to measure against future years and see progress.**



Click or scan to view online  
[t2.events](http://t2.events)

**Top Tip: Implement a ‘bring your own cup’ policy. This is a quick win in terms of reducing waste, reducing cost, discouraging throwaway one use culture (which is particularly bad with plastic) and encourages a reusable mindset.**

## T2 Events

**T2 events run triathlons, open water swimming and other multisport events around the Bay and Cumbria.**

They have recently added a sustainability policy to their website which helps measure their environmental progress, shows transparency and keeps them accountable. They also organise litter picks that tie in as an opportunity to recce the course for their events, for example the run section of Kendal Sprint Triathlon.

Tasha, the founder of T2 events says “It’s important so we can come back and repeat the experience, and continue to share with others the environment in which we choose to spend our time.



By eliminating bib numbers we use less tyvek paper - straight away saving costs and using less product.

Reusing swim caps - swim caps are a big expense for event organisers and yes it’s great to have a special cap for that big challenge event. But for our mid week tris which are repeated 4 times in the year we decided we didn’t need to issue new caps to repetitive swimmers.

Not offering bottled water or plastic cups made the athletes get their water bottles and refill those rather than creating more waste.”

T2 events also reuse bunting rather than race tape for the start and finish of their events.



Click or scan to view online  
thelap.co.uk

**Top Tip: Create a sustainability strategy and policy. This is a way to be transparent and share your sustainability journey with participants. You can use Green Small Business for support with this task, but you can also do it on your own!**



## The Lap, Windermere

**The Lap Windermere is a 47mile ultra-marathon round Lake Windermere.**

Starting in 2019, they are a fairly new event so are in a great position for trialling and testing different ways to run the event even more responsibly.

Davy Newell, the founder of this trail ultra marathon says “For me, it is important to minimise the impact on the local community as much as possible. This will ensure the longevity of the event.

If we roll in with too many participants, trash the trails, leave litter everywhere and signs or cable ties behind after the event, it won't be very long before people get their backs up, and those all-important permissions become harder to obtain.

Mostly, the reason I want to hold an event somewhere is because it's beautiful and I want to introduce people to it. If you don't look after it, it won't be very long before people don't want to come and take part.

In discussions with Forestry England about event signage and how and where to hang it, they proposed reusable cable ties. I initially wasn't keen as I felt that people would just move them. Thinking about it later though, I decided to trial it because, if people are going to move signs, they are just going to rip them down anyway. We are now 100% reusable cable ties and gone are the days of bin bags full of cut cable ties to bin, or try and recycle after an event.”

## Dirtbags

**Dirtbags Climbing is a wonderful business that redirects textiles and plastic waste generated by the outdoor recreation industry from landfill.**

They upcycle outdoor gear, for example old climbing rope into chalk bags. Jennifer, one of the founders, answered a few questions for this guide.

**Q: What is it you do that could help outdoor events to run in a more sustainable way?**

Education, really, highlighting the errors in other events and suggesting more eco-friendly alternatives. So this would be to reduce any single use plastics on site, we also are able to reuse any marketing materials used following said event. For example turning old banners into tote bags.



Click or scan to view online  
dirtbagsclimbing.co.uk

**Q: Why is it important to you that outdoor events are run in a sustainable way?**

It sets a good precedent for those attending, allowing companies to lead by example. Of course, any event running outdoors that is damaging to the outdoors should not be run at all.

**Q: Can you think of a few examples where you can alter an event to minimise your environmental impact?**

Something as simple as not handing out giveaways, flyers or leaflets. In terms of events, unwanted paperwork seems to always be left behind. Arranging car pools and maximising the amount of people per car works well too, so parking, and the amount of vehicles on site doesn't become an issue.



**Top Tip: Think about repurposing and upcycling, rather than throwing things away. For example, if you have left over marketing materials from a previous event, contact Dirtbags to see if they can re-purpose these for future events.**



## Trash Free Trails Approved

Trash Free Trails are a fantastic organisation with a mission to remove 75% of single use pollution.

Much of the infrastructure of outdoor events revolves around this type of pollution, due to the “single use” nature of events in general. If we are able to get ahead of the problem, encouraging event organisers to minimise their single use impact on the environments that host them, then we might well save ourselves, and the event organisers a job in cleaning up after the event has taken place.

More broadly, outdoor events can have a huge impact on the environments in which they take place, often with thousands or tens of thousands of attendees. If sustainability is at the forefront of the planning, execution and delivery of events, that impact can be reduced, but perhaps more importantly, the message, lessons learned and outcomes will be taken away by those thousands of people.



Click or scan to view online  
[trashfreetrails.org/tft-approved](https://trashfreetrails.org/tft-approved)

Any steps that any organisation can take to reduce their impact is of huge benefit to the environment, and our mission. Whether it’s encouraging land based travel or ride sharing, or completely eliminating single use products from your event, the message will be seen far and wide.

**TFT Approved** is a free to use, self-accreditation checklist that event organisers can use to massively reduce their single use impact on the natural spaces that host them. Event organisers are able to download a comprehensive pack of guidelines, checklists and assets that allows them to measure their impact and offer areas for improvement, as well as always having something to celebrate.

**Top Tip: Check out TFT Approved and run through their guidance, so you are certain you’re doing the best you can when it comes to the environmental responsibility of your event.**



## Checklist

Am I keeping my event accountable by measuring and recording carbon related data?

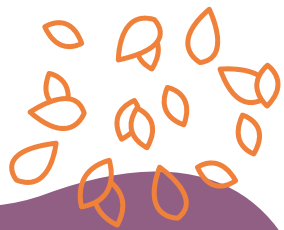
Does my event and/or business have an environmental policy in place?

Have I provided participants with options to attend the event via greener ways of travel? (For example public transport or car sharing)

Is my event educating others of environmentally responsible approaches?

Has social inclusivity been considered within my event?

Is my event leaving a positive environmental legacy?



# Find out more



**Race Lift website:**  
Car share to races  
(donations welcome)  
[racelifts.org/new.php](http://racelifts.org/new.php)



**Cumbria County Council:** Form to fill in before a race  
[cumbria.gov.uk/  
events\\_calendar/  
eventsafetyinformation.asp](http://cumbria.gov.uk/events_calendar/eventsafetyinformation.asp)



**Vision 2025:** Useful website for sustainable outdoor events and festivals.  
**Created the Show Must Go On Report**  
[vision2025.org.uk](http://vision2025.org.uk)



**Green Small Business:** A local company that helps businesses run sustainably  
[greensmallbusiness.com](http://greensmallbusiness.com)



**Waste into Wellbeing**  
[slacc.org.uk/wiw/donate](http://slacc.org.uk/wiw/donate)



**Ecolibrium: Carbon offsetting responsibly**  
[ecolibrium.earth](http://ecolibrium.earth)



**Outdoor Friendly pledge**  
[outdoorfriendly.org](http://outdoorfriendly.org)



**Council for Responsible Sport**  
[councilforresponsiblesport.org](http://councilforresponsiblesport.org)



**Trees not Tees**  
[treesnottees.com](http://treesnottees.com)



**Biosecurity Resources**  
[nonnativespecies.org/assets/  
Document-repository/biosec\\_](http://nonnativespecies.org/assets/Document-repository/biosec_pack-1.pdf)  
pack-1.pdf



**Marine Conservation Society**  
[mcsuk.org](http://mcsuk.org)



**West Cumbria Rivers Trust**  
[westcumbriariverstrust.org](http://westcumbriariverstrust.org)



## Morecambe Bay Partnership

We are a charity working for people, nature and heritage and to keep Morecambe Bay special. Our charity's vision is for Morecambe Bay to be an exceptional place to live & an outstanding place to visit. A place where the local economy provides healthy, happy, low carbon living for everyone. Nature is more abundant, heritage is understood, protected & celebrated, and our culture is thriving.

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