



# More Than a Sport

## Environmental Sustainability Strategy

March 2025



# Foreword

Rugby league is “More than a Sport”. That is the top line of our strategy for the sport for 2022-2030. It is a cultural identity, a passion, a way of life and a force for good. Our sport unites people, inspires communities and embodies resilience and determination, all values which are essential in helping us to tackle the challenges posed by climate change.

Inherent in the RFL strategy is a recognition that our grassroots underpin everything. We recognise that the communities where Rugby League is played are more likely to be adversely affected by climate change. This strategy is not only about addressing environmental impact; it’s about safeguarding the future of Rugby League and protecting the communities who support it. The well-being of our players, fans, clubs, and the wider community is intrinsically linked to the health of our environment, and we have a responsibility to lead by example.

We invite everyone who loves and supports Rugby League to join us on this journey. Our sport has always stood for resilience, unity, and strength in the face of challenges. Together we can channel that same spirit towards protecting our environment, ensuring that our sport not only survives but thrives in a changing world.



**Tony Sutton**

Rugby Football League, CEO



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RL Commercial, Managing Director

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# Background

In 2020, while celebrating our 125th anniversary, we took time to reimagine Rugby League for the next 125 years. We realised that climate change and extreme weather are already impacting sports in the UK and worldwide.

Consequently, we embedded Environmental Sustainability into our Strategy 2022 to 2030, 'More than a Sport', under our Well Governed and Inclusive pillar.

To achieve this, we partnered with BASIS (the British Association for Sustainable Sport), who conducted an environmental sustainability audit of the RFL, professional clubs, and selected asset-owning amateur and community clubs to evaluate their current activities and engagement levels. This work allowed the RFL and our professional clubs to establish the groundwork for their individual action plans. To maintain progress, the RFL, with strategic partner IMG, introduced a grading system for all clubs in 2023. Under this system, clubs were required to produce an environmental sustainability action to meet the minimum standards.

In 2023 and 2024, the RFL collaborated with the University of York on various research projects focused on Environmental Sustainability.

This strategy is the culmination of these efforts, driving our Environmental Sustainability initiatives through the sport and into our communities.

# Big Picture

Rugby League is woven into the fabric of our communities, and as we look to the future, it's clear our game's resilience and growth are inseparable from the health of the world around us.

Climate change and environmental decline pose serious risk, not only to the sport we love but to the communities that support and sustain it. This strategy reflects our commitment to take meaningful action, to be part of the solution, and to inspire those around us to do the same.

We know that real change demands a team effort, which is why we're committed to collaborating with players, fans, clubs, partners, and communities. Together, we have the power to drive lasting change. By embedding sustainable practices, we're not just protecting the future of Rugby League; we're strengthening our communities, inspiring our supporters, and leaving a legacy of environmental responsibility for generations to come.

As we move forward, we will continuously assess our progress, celebrate achievements, and learn from challenges, refining our approach to ensure that our commitment to the environment remains strong. We are committed to playing our part in creating a greener, more sustainable future for all.

# Areas of Responsibility

## RFL/RLC as an organisation

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Our day-to-day activities at our offices, units, and the work of our staff wherever they operate.

## RFL/RLC as an owner of major events

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The portfolio of our major events include men, women, and wheelchair, SL Grand Finals, Challenge Cup Finals, Internationals, and other programmes (i.e. Community Lions).

## RFL as a national governing body

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UK National Governing Body comprising millions of fans and hundreds of thousands of players across 36 professional clubs, 291 community clubs, and 35 club foundations.

# The UN Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 interconnected goals aim to create a better and more sustainable future for everyone across a broad spectrum of economic, social, and environmental areas.

While we aim to contribute towards all 17 SDGs we will have a particular focus on the following:



# Our Commitment



In July 2024, we signed the **Sport England ‘Going for Green Pledge’**, committing yourselves to find new ways to become greener in our work.

We pledge to support initiatives that ensure our sector is in the leading pack in tackling climate change.

We have agreed to:

- **Reduce** energy and water usage
- **Champion** walking, cycling, and lift-sharing when travelling to activities
- Drastically **reducing** reliance on single use plastics
- **Recycle** waste and **increase** the reuse of sports equipment and kit
- **Boost** activity to nurture nature and wildlife



In February 2025, we became the latest organisation to be a signatory for the **United Nations Sport for Climate Action (UNS4CA) Initiative**. It aims at supporting and guiding sports actors in achieving global climate change goals.

As a signatory we commit to adhere to five principles:

1. **Undertake** systematic efforts to promote greater environmental responsibility
2. **Reduce** overall climate impact
3. **Educate** for climate action
4. **Promote** sustainable and responsible consumption
5. **Advocate** for climate through communication



In February 2025, we became the 98th signatory of the **‘Sport for Nature’ (S4N) Framework**, a joint initiative of the **International Union for Conservation of Nature, International Olympic Committee, the UN Environment Programme, and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity**.

We commit to undertake ambitious and measurable action for nature by upholding S4N’s four principles to:

1. **Protect** nature and avoid damage to natural habitats and species
2. **Restore and regenerate** nature wherever possible
3. **Understand and reduce** risks to nature in our supply chains
4. **Educate and inspire** positive action for nature across and beyond sport



# Strategy Structure

Our three foundational pillars provide the overarching purpose for this strategy. They will be addressed through our three priorities, which in turn are underpinned by our objectives, targets, and actions defining how we will achieve this.



# Foundational Pillars

At the heart of RFL's Environmental Sustainability strategy lie three foundational pillars that guide our actions and aspirations. They look at how we will integrate, act, and advocate this strategy to embed change internally and influence our stakeholders:

## Integrate

Embed sustainable practices in our operations

## Act

Empower and equip the sport and Rugby League community to be more environmentally sustainable

## Advocate

Use our platform to amplify, engage, and drive positive environmental change

# Strategic Priorities

Our approach is supported by specific milestones that provide a roadmap for progress and represent our ambition and commitment to real, measurable impact. To do this we are splitting our strategic priorities into three core areas. These are: tackling net zero, try scoring resources, and converting our practise.

All three priorities are interconnected in various ways and positive action on one can often positively impact the outcome of others.





# Tackling NetZero

The RFL's mission to lead the Rugby League community in fostering a sustainable future starts with taking action to combat climate change and its impacts.

As a signatory of both the UN's Sports for Climate Action Framework and the IUCN 'Sport for Nature' Framework, we are committed to minimising our own greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions and achieving net-zero.

With continued support from our institutional partners, UK Sport, Sport England, and the IRL (International Rugby League), we will report annually against targets.

**GOAL**  
To achieve  
Net Zero by  
2040





# Tackling NetZero

## Objectives

### Calculate our Greenhouse Gas emissions

Report across scopes 1, 2, and 3

### Reduce our carbon emissions

Reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions within our operational control across scopes 1, 2, and 3

## Targets

Calculate a baseline year for 2025, with an ongoing assessment of annual GHG emissions.

Develop and implement a carbon reduction plan by the end of 2025 and report against it annually.

Achieve a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, and achieve NetZero by 2040.

Offset all emissions that cannot be removed by 2030.

## Goals

Identify the carbon footprint and specific sustainability issues in our operations, across our stakeholders, and at our events.

Align the reduction plan to the UN Sports for Climate Action targets.

Annual reporting to our signatories.

Adopt sustainable travel solutions for all staff, central operations, and activity.

Set specific targets for our sustainable travel solutions as part of the carbon reduction plan.



# Try Scoring Resources

Making sustainable choices, making sustainable decisions, and consuming sustainable practise.

We recognise the need to reduce our consumption of energies across our operations and the need to work together to build a future for us to play in.

By adopting the circular economy approach, we will ensure equipment, kit, and materials that support our activities and events have extended lifecycles and higher 'end of use' value.

We will work with our suppliers and the supply chain to embed more sustainable practices in everything we do, by reassessing the need, quantities, and types of materials.





# Try Scoring Resources

Objectives	Targets	Goals
<p><b>Promote responsible energy consumption</b></p> <p>Reduce the consumption of gas, electricity, and water.</p>	<p>Deliver a sustainable facilities strategy across all clubs.</p> <p>Adopt a sustainable culture incentivising a reduction in energy consumption.</p>	<p>Invest in technologies, a renewable energy generation, and fuels.</p> <p>Create initiatives to commit and reduce usage.</p>
<p><b>Integrate environmental decision-making</b></p> <p>Implement environmental considerations into every decision we make.</p>	<p>Environmental sustainability becomes embedded into the governance of RL.</p> <p>Protect and enhance an increased biodiversity around our sport and our facilities.</p>	<p>Assess the environmental impact of our choices, and ensure that sustainability is factored into our planning.</p> <p>Work with projects and charities to maximise opportunities that benefit our communities.</p>
<p><b>Implement sustainable procurement processes</b></p> <p>Reduce, reuse, and recycle waste opportunities and offer circular solutions.</p>	<p>All partners and suppliers become aligned to our sustainable procurement code.</p> <p>Establish second life avenues for kit and equipment.</p> <p>Zero avoidable single use products and materials from central operations and events by 2026.</p>	<p>Reduce waste and upcycle/recycle where possible supporting a circular economy.</p> <p>Engage with kit reuse schemes locally and nationally.</p>



# Converting our Practise

Rugby League is rooted in its communities with a loyal and passionate fan base. By harnessing the power of the sport to engage, educate, and inspire, we can create a brighter, more sustainable future.

As the national governing body of Rugby League, we are in the unique position to drive wider environmental and societal change across our clubs, leagues, and with stakeholders.

We need to learn, train, and drive change in Rugby League to ensure the future of our sport and livelihood.

We will engage with the wider rugby league community to spread awareness and disseminate best practice.

## RFL/RLC Sustainability Network

Our network aims to create a community for individuals, groups, clubs, foundations, and stakeholders with a passion and drive to create a sustainable future for our sport.







# Converting our Practise

## Objectives

### Educate and embed sustainability across the sport

Provide training programmes, resources, and toolkits to the RL community.

### Work with our networks to drive positive climate action

Celebrate success stories and share learnings across our networks

## Targets

All professional clubs and foundations to have an environmental sustainability action plan and engaged ambassador by 2026.

With 6% of our current workforce Carbon Literacy trained, we will double this by the end of 2025.

Implement the RFL Sustainability Network across our sport, connecting individuals with a passion for delivering meaningful change.

Extend our sustainability training to club and foundation representatives involved in sustainability projects.

## Goals

Provide all clubs and foundations with access to sustainability support, training, and resources.

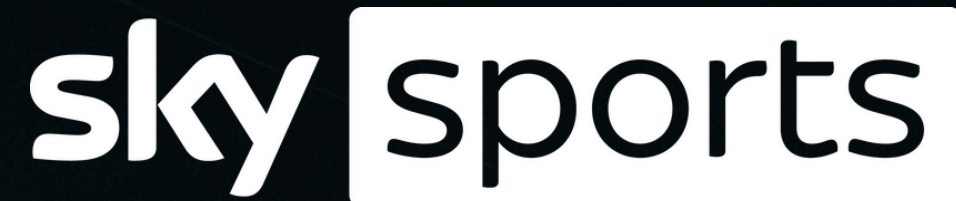
Provide an educational toolkit on the 'World's Largest Lesson' for schools and foundations for future generations.

Support our communities to mitigate against climate change and raise awareness.

Work with partners to deliver and support campaigns that maximise the reach of sustainability messaging, whilst embedding this into communication plans.

# Partners

We will continue to work closely with our partners to implement our strategic priorities across the sport.



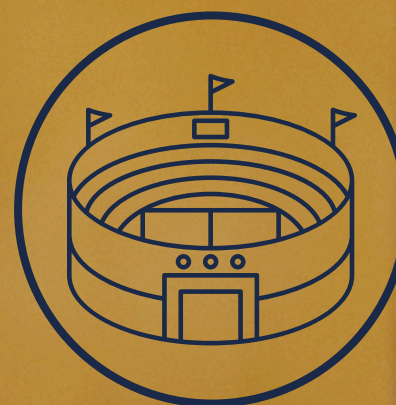
# Success for this strategy

A vision to lead the rugby league community in fostering a sustainable future, where our passion for the game aligns with a commitment to environmental action.



## The RFL

We will lead by example by prioritising sustainability in our day-to-day activities and throughout our operations. We will empower our workforce to advocate for change and encourage our stakeholders to join us on our journey.



## Our Events

We will commit to reduce the environmental impact of our events by working closely with venues to adopt policies and procedures to be used as a reference throughout the full life-cycle of event delivery.



## The Game

We will support and educate our clubs, foundations, communities, and fans to ensure they are well-equipped to combat climate change and able to adapt to our changing world.

