

# Climate change and environment guidance

Written by Briony Latter, Debbie Stenner and Paul Colley-Davies for the Welsh Fell Runners Association (WFRA). Adopted by the WFRA Committee on 22nd February 2023.

Due for review: 21/02/2024

A climate and nature emergency has been declared in Wales. Overcoming these linked crises demands behavioural and societal change, not just technological progress. Some areas have a bigger impact on climate change than others - for example, transport is the largest source of emissions in the UK. As well as carbon emissions, we have a broader impact on the environment, such as waste, plastic and pollution.

## How does this relate to fell running and the WFRA?

While the climate and environmental impact of fell running is undoubtedly small, there is still a need for us to take responsibility and action to reduce this wherever possible and be seen to be doing so. Transport is a clear area where we can significantly reduce our impact. Action is already happening in running at an individual and community level - both at the grassroots and in professional sport. However, action and support at a more systemic level is also important.

The WFRA Code of Conduct (which applies to its own officers, WFRA members, and participants in WFRA races/activities) already sets out a requirement to:

*“treat the countryside with respect”*

Additionally, the WFRA Race Organiser’s (RO) Handbook already states that they should:

*“limit the number of competitors to a level which is [...] acceptable in terms of environmental impact”*

**The following guidance builds on the existing WFRA documentation. It acknowledges the WFRA’s responsibility to act on this guidance, and guide and support the action of others.**

## What are the WFRA’s recommendations?

Our recommendations are split into three sections in line with the Code of Conduct, though we also recommend that actions are taken at a club level. Some suggestions are included in the resource sheet below.

### The WFRA should:

1. Identify a point of contact for climate and environment in the WFRA Committee
2. Create a resource sheet detailing practical information for anyone involved in fell running, to be kept as a live document which can be regularly updated (see page 3)
3. Actively support ROs with the below recommendations, for example in RO meetings

4. Promote car sharing and 'active travel' (e.g. cycling) in the WFRA calendar and other communications.

#### **Race organisers (ROs) should consider:**

1. Environmental impact as part of the race risk assessment
2. Providing information about local public transport provision
3. Providing incentives for environmentally friendly behaviour such as cycling/lift sharing/using public transport
4. Appointing a volunteer to assist with point 3 and provide information
5. The start time of the races and if this can be arranged to facilitate people attending by public transport
6. Using race numbers that are reusable or recyclable and communicate this to runners
7. Minimising use of single use plastics (e.g., cups/bottles).

#### **Participants in WFRA races should:**

1. Consider the four pillars from [The Green Runners](#) regarding how, as a runner, you:
  - a. Move (travel to the event in a more sustainable way)
  - b. Kit-up (the running kit you use)
  - c. Eat (general diet and food for running)
  - d. Speak out (encouraging others to take action)
2. Follow the [Countryside Code](#). Dispose of all rubbish responsibly and take it home if no waste facilities are available
3. Follow RO guidance on using paths and permissible route choices (these may be necessary to prevent erosion or protect wildlife, such as ground-nesting upland birds).

**See the resource sheet below (a 'live document') for details and examples of practical actions that can be taken.**

# Resource sheet (live document)

Last updated: 17/04/2023

This resource sheet is a live document to be updated regularly and is not subject to the review timeframe of the official WFRA guidance document above. The content is managed by Briony Latter, the WFRA Environmental Officer, and has been collated from multiple sources - it is not explicitly endorsed by the WFRA.

The aim of this resource sheet is to provide **helpful details and practical examples of actions** that you can take to address climate change and environmental issues in fell running. Links to **templates and examples are provided wherever possible**. While we are focused on Wales and the borders, we have included suggestions and examples from further afield.

- **Are you a Race Organiser who is making your race more sustainable?**
- **Is your club taking environmental action that others could learn from?**
- **Are you taking personal actions that could be implemented more widely?**
- **Do you know of others who are leading the way in making fell running more environmentally friendly?**
- **Do you know of other sports or outdoor activities from which we could learn?**

You can help us to add practical ideas, tips and examples to this resource sheet!

Contact the Environmental Officer at [environment@welshfellrunnersassociation.org.uk](mailto:environment@welshfellrunnersassociation.org.uk)

## Races

If you organise multiple races, your ability to take action and the impact you can have is likely to be larger than those who organise a single race.

However, much depends on the location e.g. a single race in a remote, sensitive landscape may have a larger environmental and climate impact than multiple races that are accessible by public transport and on less sensitive terrain.

The impact of races can also be addressed by race participants, not solely by ROs.

Landscape	
<b>Look after your local running patch</b>	<p><a href="#">George Fisher's Tea Round</a> in the Lake District has partnered with Fix the Fells, an organisation who repair and maintain upland paths that have become eroded. They encourage participants to donate to them - there is helpful wording on their website that ROs could draw on.</p> <p>Could you see if there are any similar organisations or</p>

	<p>initiatives that cover your race location?</p> <p>Or could you be more proactive? You could organise an activity before/after the race to look after the landscape that you are running through. Ask permission from the landowners or team up with the organisation/community group who look after part of your race route to repair paths, clear litter, improve habitats etc.</p>
<b>Team members</b>	
<b>Subject expertise</b>	<p>You could bring in external expertise, or you may find that there are already people with relevant knowledge within your local fell running community.</p> <p>The WFRA will identify a point of contact for climate and environment in the WFRA, who should be able to point you in the right direction for advice.</p> <p><a href="#">The OMM</a> have a dedicated ecologist.</p> <p><a href="#">Ourea Events</a> (<b>Dragon's Back, Cape Wrath Ultra etc.</b>) worked with a carbon accounting expert to reduce the carbon emissions from their event. They are also aiming to have a team member who is responsible for sustainability.</p>
<b>Transport</b> Consider both incentives <i>and</i> disincentives.	
<b>Disincentives e.g. charging</b>	<p>Consider charging for parking if people aren't car sharing. <b>Damian Hall</b> notes in his book (see <i>Increase your knowledge</i> section below) that for <b>Dunnerdale fell race</b>:</p> <p style="color: green;"><i>"cars with one or two people in pay £5 to park, vehicles with four or more park free and get a free beer, while, brilliantly, cyclists and walkers are paid £5"</i></p>
<b>Incentives e.g. payments/discounts</b>	<p>See above for how <b>Dunnerdale fell race</b> approaches incentives alongside disincentives. There are multiple areas that could be covered by discounts or payments e.g., race entry discount, drinks, food.</p>
<b>Assistance</b>	<p>While not possible for all races, coach/minibus collection for participants who are travelling from or arriving into the same location would help to significantly reduce emissions from transport.</p>

	<p>Entry for the <b>Welsh 1000m Peaks race</b> (A to B) includes <a href="#">free coach travel</a> from race HQ to the start of the race, as well as a free shuttle bus back to HQ from the end of the race.</p> <p>In his book, <b>Damian Hall</b> also mentions a race that does:  <i>“free shuttle-bus pick-ups from two local train stations”</i></p> <p><b>Llanbedr to Blaenavon fell race</b> (A to B) asks participants to:  <i>“Either leave your car at the finish and buddy up for a lift to the start or we will try to group people for lifts after the prize giving to collect cars.”</i></p>
<p><b>Information provision and encouragement</b></p>	<p>Participants should be encouraged to take public transport, car share and active travel (e.g. cycle, walk) where possible. People could also be encouraged to share their experiences of travelling to races in low-carbon ways.</p> <p>In 2022/23, Paul Colley-Davies <b>cycled to and competed in all of the races in the WFRA South Wales Winter Hill Series</b>. He <a href="#">shared his experience</a> on the WFRA Facebook group.</p> <p>In 2022, <a href="#">Finlay Wild was interviewed</a> about the British Fell Running Championships <i>“where he got the train, cycled 65km, won the race, broke the record and cycled part way home again”</i>.</p> <p><a href="#">Ridge Runners</a> are a not-for-profit race organisation (Cardiff based) who focus on being sustainable and environmentally friendly. They have good examples of how to provide helpful travel information to participants (see race pages). ROs could use this as a template. Information can be shared by race organisers but also by the WFRA e.g. in the race calendar.</p> <p><b>The OMM</b> also <a href="#">encourages car sharing</a>, asking for <i>“minimum 2 people per vehicle wherever possible”</i> and suggesting that participants could arrange this on their Facebook page.</p>
<p><b>Timings</b></p>	<p>ROs should consider the impact of the start times of your race. Consider arranging timings to facilitate people attending by public transport.</p> <p>Races in the winter could start earlier so that they finish in time for lunch and those that cycle can get home in the light.</p> <p>Note that race timings have also been highlighted as an issue regarding <i>“challenges in juggling childcare arrangements,</i></p>

	<p><i>especially where races are held in the middle of the day on the weekend and therefore take up the whole day” (WFRA Women in Fell Running Working Group).</i></p> <p><b>Damian Hall</b> notes in his book that:</p> <p><i>“In some circumstances, a race simply changing the start time could reduce emissions far more radically than going plastic-free or cancelling their T-shirt order”</i></p>
<p><b>Group activities</b></p>	<p>There is potential for a fun recognition or challenge of self-declared cycling distance/ascent to and from individual races, or race series. This could be something that others can help with, in combination with or separately from ROs - for example a small group of cyclists could encourage others to get involved. It could also be a WFRA race series challenge.</p> <p>While this is organised by an external organisation, an example of something similar in practice is by Red Fox Cycling who organise <a href="#">guided cycles to music festivals</a> across the UK.</p>
<p><b>Systemic change</b></p>	<p>If local public transport is bad or non-existent, consider what you could do to try to change that e.g. engage with local councillors, write to your MP etc. <a href="#">Hope for the Future</a> is a charity which works with communities, groups and individuals to engage with their local representatives about climate change - they can offer support and training.</p>
<p><b>Documentation and understanding your impact</b></p>	<p>ROs should make sure environmental impact is considered in risk assessments. The WFRA risk assessment template is being updated to address this.</p> <p><b>The OMM</b> conducts <a href="#">ecological impact assessments</a> and has a clear outline of what this includes, as well as reports from previous events.</p> <p><b>Ourea Events (Dragon’s Back, Cape Wrath Ultra etc.)</b> have produced <a href="#">annual sustainability reports</a>. While this may not be appropriate for individual races, it is possible. Their report has lots of ideas to draw on and useful information to get you thinking about the impact of your race/s.</p> <p>For example, carbon emissions for the organisation of their 2021 events mainly came from event team travel (30%), event merch (29%) and vehicles (20%).</p>

	They also measured <b>participant travel</b> which generated almost <b>three times the amount of carbon emissions than the organisation of the event</b> . They measured where each participant travelled from and how they travelled.
<b>Combining travel</b>	For participants - if you are travelling to race in an area that you intend to return to (e.g. on holiday), could you combine your trips so that you travel less overall?
<b>Wildlife and landscape</b>	
<b>Changing practices</b>	Debbie Stenner has written a <a href="#">blog for Gwent Wildlife Trust</a> about <b>upland wildlife considerations for fell runners</b> and hill walkers. It includes helpful advice (some related to specific areas in Wales) from ecologists for both runners and race organisers including about the breeding season (March-August) and the impact of not using paths.
<b>Waste</b>	
<b>Plastics</b>	ROs should use race numbers that are reusable or recyclable and communicate this to runners, as many race numbers do not have information on them regarding how to dispose of them.
<b>Prizes</b>	<b>Damian Hall</b> lists examples of several races that consider the environmental impact of their prizes e.g. recycled slate metals, locally made and sustainable trophies, <i>“energy bars in edible wrappers”</i> .
<b>Clothing</b>	<p>While clothing is not commonly used as prizes or available to buy for taking part in fell races, it can be a big part of other races.</p> <p>Where clothing is offered (e.g. hats, t-shirts), ROs and participants should consider whether this is necessary, and also whether they have been made sustainably (and ethically). You could contact ROs about changing their practices on this.</p> <p><a href="#">Comrie Castle Sewing Services</a> can sew unwanted race t-shirts together to make blankets or cushions.</p> <p>When your kit needs repairing, if you are unable to do this yourself there are companies who can help. For example, <a href="#">Lancashire Sports Repairs</a> and <a href="#">Cheshire Shoe Repairs</a>. In Wales, <a href="#">Snowdonia Gear Repair</a> are recommended - they also collect and return to local outdoor shops e.g., in Llanberis. If</p>

	you have other local recommendations for places in Wales, please let us know.
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## Clubs

Improving information and understanding of your impact	
<b>Creating or following guidance/policies</b>	Clubs (and individuals, including juniors) can join <a href="#">The Green Runners</a> . They have examples of pledges that their members have taken on their website (regarding travel, running kit, food, and speaking out). You could team up with a group of people in your club to suggest this to your club committee for discussion.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Could you appoint someone to your club committee to be responsible for climate change and environmental issues? Or organise a more informal group of people within your club to start looking at these issues?
<b>Information provision</b>	Encourage people to car share/use public transport/use active travel (e.g. walking, cycling) to attend your regular runs. Think about how visible this information is - you could make it clear on your website/social media, provide regular reminders etc.
<b>Understanding your carbon emissions</b>	You could use a carbon emissions calculator (multiple versions available online) to understand the impact your club has. This could include looking at regular club runs as well as other group activities that your club takes part in.

## Wider engagement

Looking further afield for how you can create change	
<b>Looking after your local running patch</b>	<p>As mentioned in the races section above, you could organise activities to look after the landscape that you are running through. This could be done independently (with permission from landowners) or working with organisations/community groups who look after the local area that you run in to repair paths, clear litter, improve habitats etc. You could also see what volunteering opportunities are available in Wales' national parks (<a href="#">Eryri</a>, <a href="#">Bannau Brycheiniog</a>, <a href="#">Pembrokeshire coast</a>) if you live nearby and run there regularly.</p> <p>For example, if you regularly run in Eryri, you could join</p>



	<p><a href="#">Cymdeithas Eryri/Snowdonia Society</a> - they do practical conservation work and campaigning.</p> <p>There may also be ways to support or partner with organisations at higher levels (i.e. club level or the WFRA themselves). E.g. although on a different subject area, the FRA announced a collaboration with Harvey Maps in February 2023.</p>
<p><b>Be part of a wider network</b></p>	<p>Consider whether there is potential for becoming part of, and learning from, a network - particularly larger races. For example, <a href="#">Vision:2025</a> <i>“help the outdoor events industry take action on the climate crisis”</i>.</p> <p><a href="#">Ourea Events</a> (Dragon’s Back, Cape Wrath Ultra etc.) have committed to the Vision:2025 pledge.</p> <p>There is also a <a href="#">Running Mayors network</a> in the UK - see an example of someone from Bolton United Harriers &amp; Athletics Club who is the <a href="#">Running Mayor for Bolton</a>. However, there are no Running Mayors in Wales - could this be an opportunity?</p>

## Increase your knowledge

Read	
<p><a href="#">We Can't Run Away From This: Racing to improve running's footprint in our climate emergency</a> (book) by Damian Hall</p>	<p>Hugely helpful book full of practical suggestions and examples for runners. Each chapter provides a set of clear actions you can take. Book review by Steve Chilton in The Fellrunner magazine (by the FRA) said:</p> <p><i>“This was a hard read - and I don’t mean that in a bad way. The subject matter is SO serious and affects us all [...] Damian takes the different aspects and treats them chapter by chapter - shoes and kit, travel, diet, etc. His research is deep and well presented [...] I definitely recommend reading this important book.”</i></p>
<p><a href="#">The greenest races in the UK</a> (article)</p>	<p>This covers road races, the OMM and trail races. There are many ideas that could be used/adapted relating to plastic use, medals, prizes, race numbers, waste, t-shirts, impact assessment reports, a dedicated ecologist, route choices, car sharing, biodegradable tape to mark the course.</p>

<p><a href="#">Talking climate handbook – how to have a climate change conversation</a> (guide) by Climate Outreach</p>	<p><i>“Having conversations about climate change in our daily lives plays a huge role in creating social change. We take our cues about what’s important from what we hear our family, friends, colleagues and neighbours talking about. [...] But talking about climate change, especially beyond the green bubble, is hard. That’s why we’ve produced an evidence-based, practical guide to help make those conversations easier and more meaningful – and to come out of them feeling inspired and connected.”</i></p>
<p><b>Listen</b></p>	
<p>The <a href="#">Athlete Climate Academy</a> podcast by Welsh science communicator Huw James and mountain athlete Kilian Jornet</p>	<p>Aimed at outdoor athletes who have a large influence and audience, but is still relevant and helpful for those at the grassroots. It is:</p> <p><i>“designed to give outdoor athletes the background they need to discuss climate change and environmental issues with confidence”</i></p> <p>Guests include Jasmin Paris, Steve Scott (Director of Kendal Mountain Festival), Alex Honnold, and many more. Available to listen on Spotify and watch on YouTube.</p>
<p><b>Watch</b></p>	
<p><a href="#">Positive Action</a> short film series</p>	<p>While not specific to running, there is a three-part short film series about <i>“outdoor athletes in the U.K. who are making a difference”</i>. Episode three features ultra runner Sarah Boden. There is an <a href="#">article about the series</a> here which includes interviews with those in the films.</p>