



# 2022 ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT





# INTRODUCTION

The rationale for paying more attention to environmental issues is clear. It's the right thing to do, stakeholders expect it, the work complements the good work we already around improving health and generating positive social impact, it provides us with a better licence to operate, and finally it could help reduce costs in the longer term.

After several years of making incremental improvements at our events to address environmental issues, in 2022 we invested in some support from a specialist sports sustainability consultant to help us develop a cohesive environmental strategy.

As part of this process, we conducted an environmental impacts survey with staff, suppliers, sponsors, stakeholders and participants, which helped identify 3 clear priority areas for the business to focus on:



*SINGLE USE  
PLASTIC*



*WASTE*



*EVENT  
PRODUCTS*

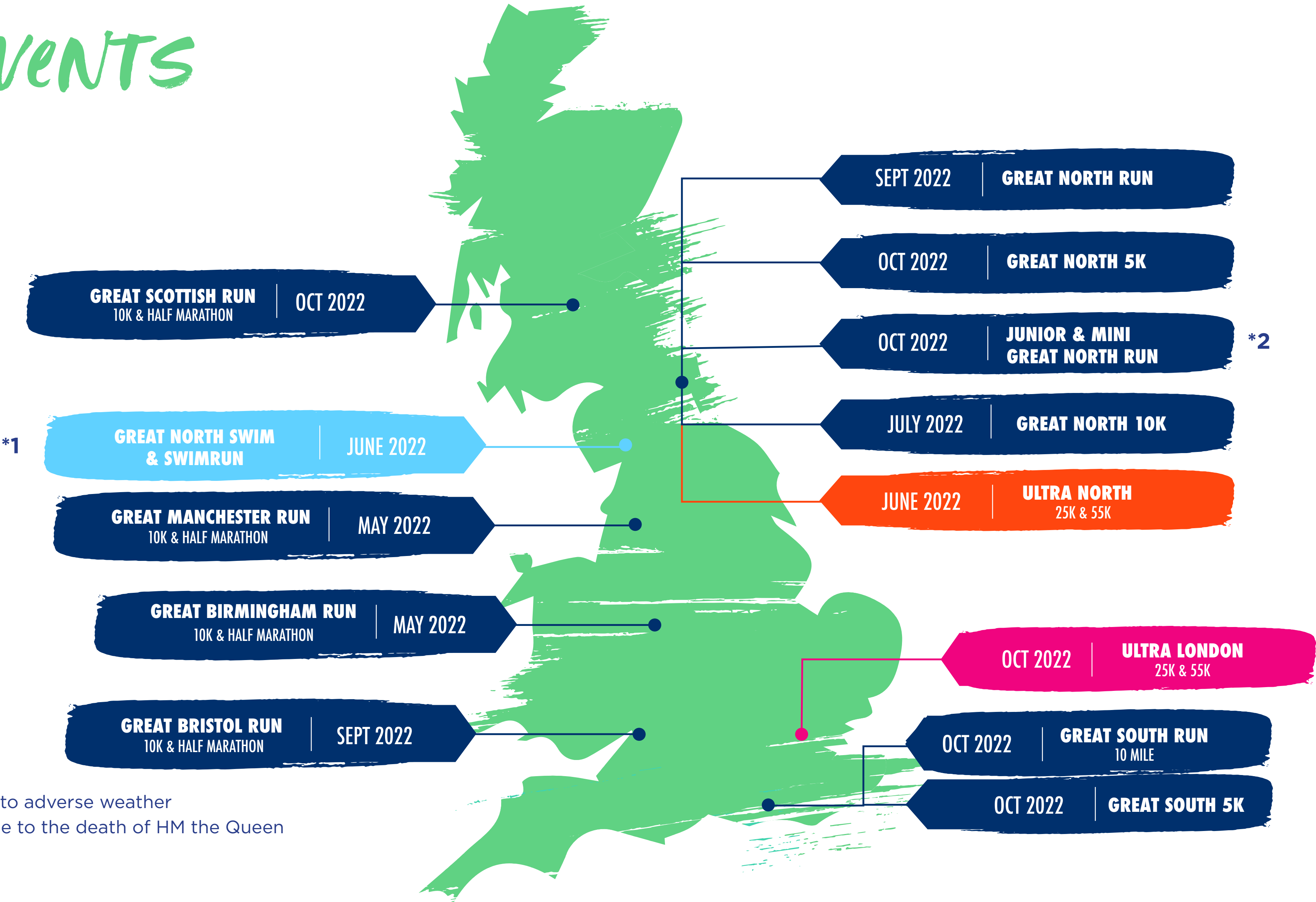
To these, we added reducing our carbon emissions as we strive to address our contribution to climate change.

In parallel with the above, the staff were engaged and a sustainability group was set up with departmental “champions” from across the business.

The above approach then led to the formation of an Environmental Strategy for 2022 and Beyond that was added to the Great Run website prior to the Great North Run:

<https://www.greatrun.org/environmental-strategy/>

# OUR EVENTS



**\*Notes**  
1 - Reduced event due to adverse weather  
2 - Re-staged event due to the death of HM the Queen

### Priority areas

In April and May 2022 we carried out surveys with staff, participants, suppliers and host cities to find out what mattered most to them around the environmental impacts from our events and operations. The results gave clear evidence that we should focus on the following environmental issues:



**SINGLE USE PLASTIC** - eliminate or reduce the use of single-use plastic and switch to more sustainable alternatives



**WASTE** - eliminate and reduce waste, encourage recycling and composting, reduce littering



**EVENT PRODUCTS** - focus on the impact of the items we give out, such as T shirts, medals, goody bags and whether we can reduce what is given out or change what we provide to more sustainable alternatives

In addition we will also focus on carbon emissions - The ongoing climate emergency means that we have a duty to understand, measure, reduce and (as a last resort) remove or offset our greenhouse gas emissions.

Our focus for 2023 will be on the things that GRC can fully control - i.e., the choice of products we supply to participants, how we give these out, the vehicles we hire and use, the conditions we put in contracts to suppliers, our staff travel and the day-to-day operations at the office and between events.

The rationale being that we need to largely “get our own house in order” before we shift our focus to looking at how we can influence our stakeholders to improve their environmental performance.



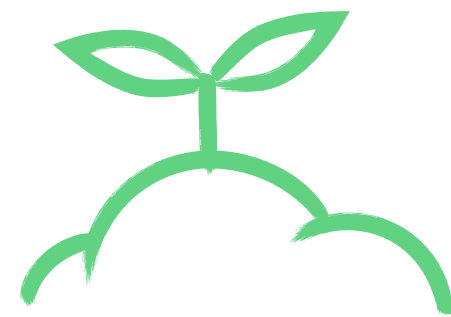


# SINGLE USE PLASTIC

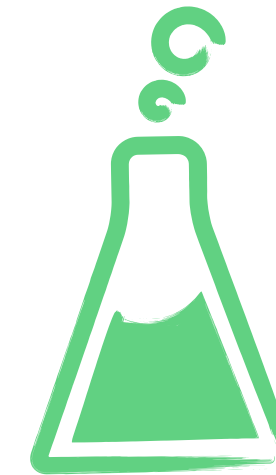
## Whats the problem?



Because single-use plastic is produced from fossil fuels, the process of extracting and creating these plastics emits huge amounts of greenhouse gases.



Plastics do not fully decompose and instead just continually break down into smaller and smaller pieces called microplastics. These microplastics pose a huge risk to wildlife and are extremely difficult to clean up.



Plastic also contains chemicals that are known endocrine disruptors and pose a threat to human health.

Not all plastic is recyclable or recycled and will therefore be landfilled or incinerated where it can leach or release toxic chemicals.

## Sources at our events

Primarily drinks bottles given out at running events

Also, cable ties, plastics from catering concessions, shrink wrap, packaging around medals and T-shirts, finisher bags)

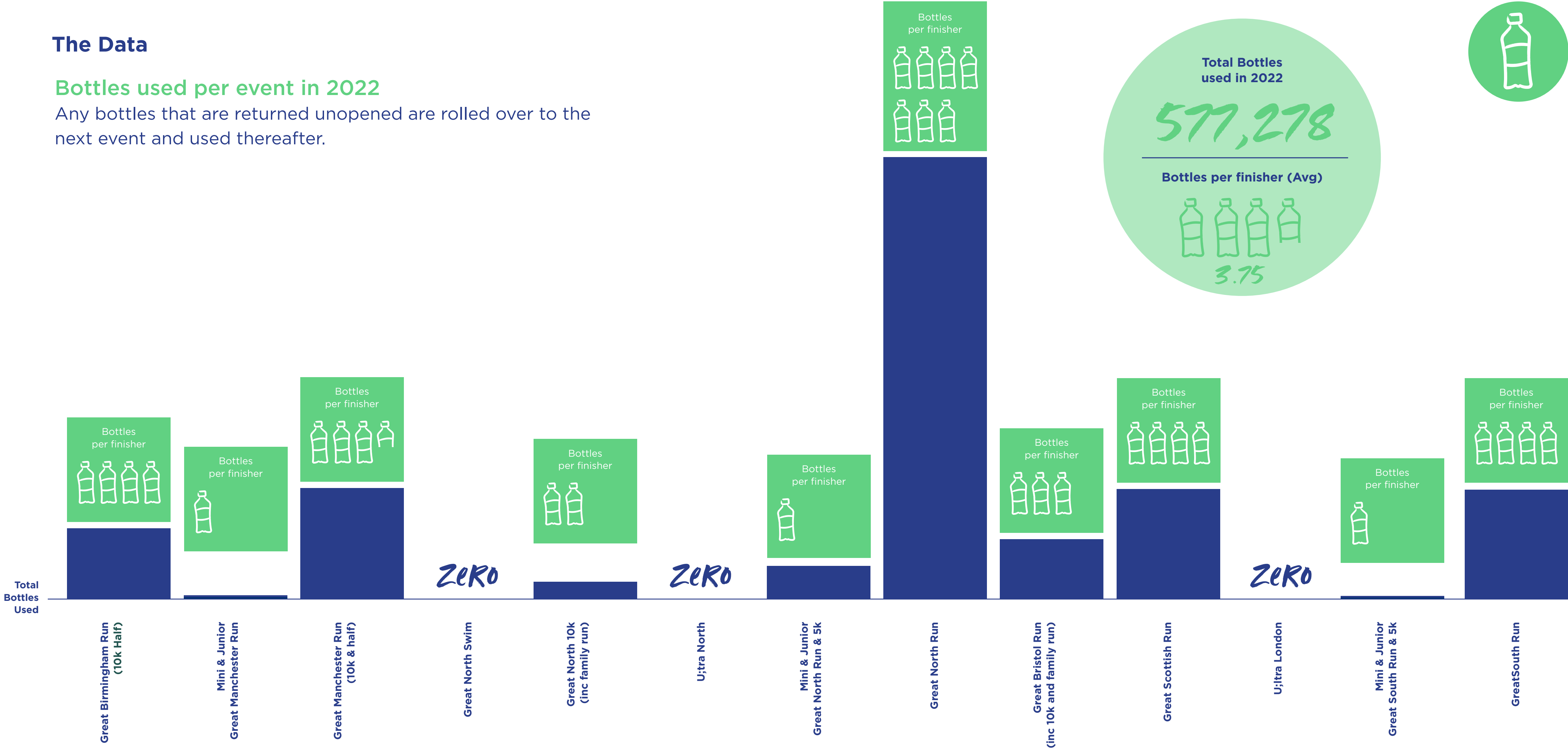




The Data

Bottles used per event in 2022

Any bottles that are returned unopened are rolled over to the next event and used thereafter.





## Actions taken in 2022

- Refill cups trialled at London Landmarks event (first time the Great Run Company has operated this provision).
- No bottled water given out at start of Great Run events. Refill stations only available at Great North Run at the Start & Finish.
- Events were provided with a smaller sized bottle (250ml) on course, which included provision at Great North Run, Great Bristol Run, Great Scottish Run and all Great South Runs. This resulted in less plastic used and less water wasted.
- Great North Swim and Ultra events do not use bottled water.



## What we will do in 2023

- No water bottles at start of any event.
- Drink/Drain/Drop campaign with “target” drop points at all drink stations.
- Messaging to runners encouraging greater self-sufficiency and use of bottle belts, hydration vests and carrying own water.
- Recycle hub at all events to improve plastic recycling.
- Water provided in compostable cups at water stations at Great Scottish Run.





# WASTE

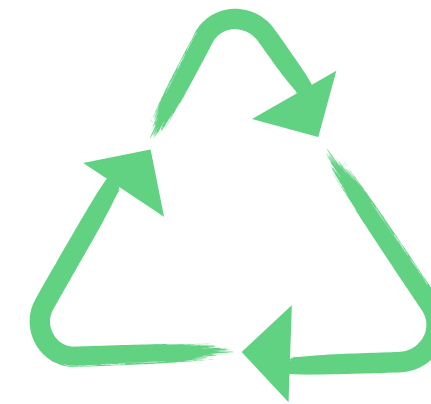
## Whats the problem?



Events create a lot of waste, which often consists of single use items.



There can be a littering culture at events – “just drop it on the ground” and the litter gets blown into water or carried into the wider environment.



There is often a rush to get things cleared up so roads can be opened – so waste separation is done hastily.

## Sources at our events

Event-day waste generally falls into the following categories:

- Clothing
- Recycling (bottles, cans, card, paper)
- General waste (plastic wrapping, food, gel wrappers, anything else)





The Data

Getting accurate waste data is very difficult due to the number of different waste contractors involved at the events and the fact that they often pick up waste from other customers in the same load, so when it gets to the waste transfer station (where it is weighed), event waste is often mixed with other waste from the area.

Although it is helpful to have data on how much waste has been collected, the focus should be on reducing the amount of waste generated by the event in the first place and to make the majority of the waste recyclable.



	Clothing	Recycled	General Waste	Plastic captured for recycling
Great North Run	4.3 TONNES	5.4 TONNES	27.38 TONNES	4.5 TONNES
Great North 10K	20KG	NO VALID DATA		23KG
Great Birmingham Run	NO VALID DATA			
Great Manchester Run	NO VALID DATA			
Great Bristol Run	170KG	NO VALID DATA	375KG	1.3 TONNES
Great Scottish Run	NO VALID DATA			
Great South Run	210KG	NO VALID DATA	5.4 TONNES	1.54 TONNES
5K / Junior & Mini Great North Run	NO VALID DATA			*
Great North Swim	NO VALID DATA			



\* Minimal amount of plastic waste collected. Waste was aggregated back at the depot.



## Actions taken in 2022

- Private waste contractors used for Great North 10K, Great North Run (Newcastle & Gateshead), and Great Bristol Run.



## What we will do in 2023

- Reduce the amount of product that we give out to reduce the quantity of waste we need to deal with.
- Improve the collection of bottles after drinks stations (making it easier for runners to deposit and improve recycling).
- Encourage “Drink, Drain, Drop” message so that runners empty out their bottles, and throw them into the “target” recycling bins at the side of the road. This improves recycling rates and makes it less dangerous for runners (fewer bottles on course)
- “Recycling hubs” will be installed at all running events to better capture drinks bottles in particular.
- Partnership with “Jog On” to provide drop-off points for used trainers at our events – they will be sent for re-use and repair.
- Further engagement with private contractor sfor targeted events to improve on cleansing operation and associated data.



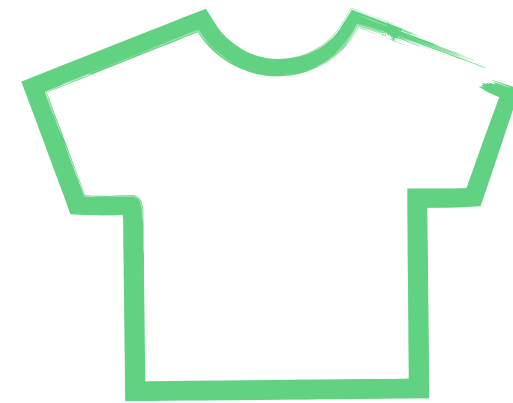


# EVENT PRODUCTS

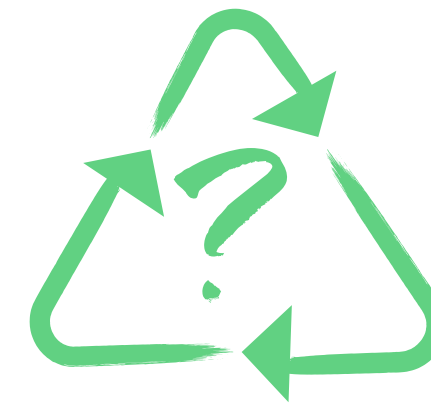
## Whats the problem?



Many of the products we give out are made from virgin material (e.g plastic for T-shirts, zinc for medals) which carry a high carbon footprint and use up resources.



We give out a lot of products, including T-shirts, medals, goody bags and foil blankets (among other things). Not everyone wants all the things we give them.



Much of this product (or its packaging) ends up as waste that GRC has to deal with (including what to do with leftover products).

## Sources at our events

- Medals
- T shirts
- Water
- Gels & nutrition
- Goody bag and contents
- Other – swim hats / foil blankets





The Data

We give out a variety of products at every event and to minimise the environmental impact of these products we need to better understand how many we give out of each item, how many we have left over and what happens to these leftover items.

As well as giving participants the choice to opt out of having certain items, we also want to make sure that the products we give out have good environmental credentials – i.e. they are made using recycled or renewable materials and are themselves recyclable.



Event	Contents
Great Birmingham 10k	B
Junior and Mini Great Birmingham Run	C
Great Birmingham Run	A
Mini and Junior Great Manchester Run	C
Great Manchester Run	B
Great Manchester Run	A
Great North Swim	B
Great North SwimRun	A
Great North 10k Family	D
Great North 10k	B
Great North 5k	B
Junior and Mini Great North Run	C
Great North Run	A
Bristol Family Events	D
Great Bristol 10k	B
Great Bristol Run	A
Mini and Junior Great Scottish Run	C
Great Scottish Run	B
Great Scottish Run	A
Great South 5k	B
Junior and Mini Great South Run	C
Great South Run	A



**Key**

**A** - Finisher’s bag, Space blanket, T-shirt, Medal, Kind Bar, Clif bar, Jointace Vitabiotics

**B** - Finisher’s bag, T-shirt, Medal, Kind Bar, Clif bar, Jointace Vitabiotics

**C** - Finisher’s bag, Medal, Fruit snack, Brioche Bar/and or Fudge bar

**D** - Medal, Bottle of water (No bag)



## What do we do with leftovers?

Goody bags are stripped out and their contents used again where possible – e.g., water and edible item. If food item is going to be out-of-date by next event, this is then donated to local food bank.

T-shirts – sent to British Red Cross Yorkshire Aid Convoy (and these are then sent to e.g., Ukraine.)

Medals are sent for recycling at specialist metal recycling facility.

## Volunteer product

We moved away from issuing jackets to our volunteers in 2018. Since then, we have adopted the approach of issuing all of our volunteers with a “Happy to help” bib to wear on the day, which is then returned after the event.

Each volunteer receives a T-shirt for them to wear and keep afterwards.

6  
TONNES

of medals recycled

The volunteer bibs are returned after each event, and washed as necessary. We have a “rolling stock” of

2200

bibs for the calendar year.

In 2022, we printed

3645

T-shirts to be given to the volunteers for the full calendar year.





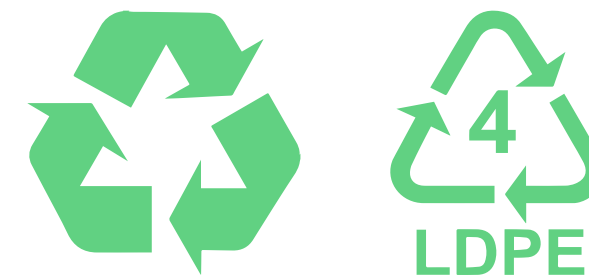
## Actions taken in 2022

- Finisher's bags are Carbon Neutral and 100% recyclable.

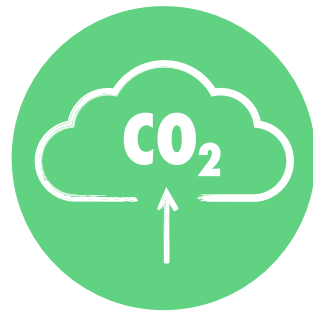


## What we will do in 2023

- We are offering all participants the option to not receive a finisher's T-shirt. Instead of receiving a T-shirt on the day, a donation will be made to the National Trust's Woodlands Appeal to fund tree planting across the UK.
- We have asked about environmental credentials of products in the procurement PQQ.
- Finisher's bags are now produced from 80% recycled material, with the bags being 100% recyclable.







# EMISSIONS

## Whats the problem?

In a nutshell, climate change.

There is no longer any question that human activity is causing climate change and this is as a result of increasing amounts of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) being released into the atmosphere.

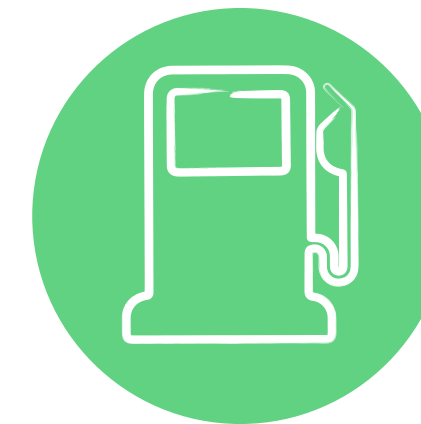
As a global issue, it requires action from individuals and companies as well as from Governments to drastically reduce quantities of GHGs entering the atmosphere.

## Sources

Emissions that Great Run Company has direct control over include:



**Gas and electricity**



**Diesel and petrol**



**Staff travel**



**Contractor and supplier travel**



## Participant Travel

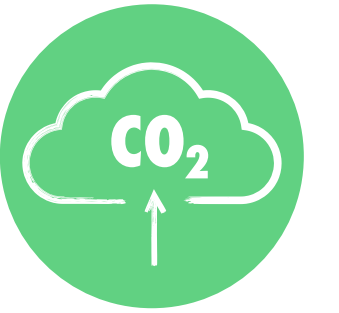
Emissions that Great Run Company has less control over, but is tracking.



## The Data

Event	Generator Fuel	Staff & Ops miles driven*	Staff Flights
Great Birmingham Run	No Data	No Data	-
Great Manchester Run	No Data	No Data	-
Great North Swim	No Data	No Data	-
Great North 10k	No Data	No Data	-
Great North 5k	212 ltr Diesel	No Data	-
Great North Run	952 ltr Diesel 1115 ltr HVO	6,417	-
Great Bristol Run	Battery Power	12,176	14
Great Scottish Run	Battery Power 5 ltr Diesel (est)	6,178	2
Great South Run	400 lt HVO	6,952	25
Great Junior & Mini Run	No Data	No Data	-
Ultra North	N/A	No Data	-
Ultra London	N/A	2,684	-

\* note that this is very incomplete data and is a major data gap



## Supplier emissions

We have reasonably complete data on the number of vehicles and distances travelled by our suppliers and partners. This has been collected by way of a supplier survey.

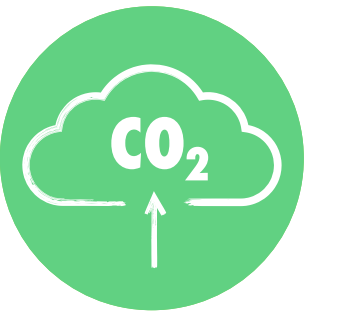
This data is helpful in terms of allowing us to identify where suppliers are travelling significant distances and we can therefore investigate whether it would be possible to find more local suppliers for each event.

However, the data we currently gather is not sufficiently detailed to allow us to calculate very accurate carbon emissions so this needs to be addressed for 2023 if we want to report on these.



## Actions taken in 2022

- HVO fuel used at Great North Run and Great South Run (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil has significantly lower carbon emissions than diesel and is a like-for-like replacement so doesn't require special generators to run on.)
- Battery power were used successfully at Bristol and in Glasgow so that emissions from generators were zero in Bristol and negligible in Glasgow.



## What we will do in 2023

- We will be transitioning to cleaner Stage V generator or generators powered by HVO.
- We will use more battery power generators.



# PARTICIPANT DATA

For the North, South, Scottish and Bristol events we were able to include additional questions to participants in the post-event survey to find out more about how people travel to events, how many people carry their own water, which products they value most and whether they would be interested in a “Green Runner” option which would mean they wouldn’t receive products but would receive a more sustainable race experience.

## Travel

Finding out about how people travel can a) enable us to more accurately assess the overall carbon impact of the event (as participant travel makes up by far the largest proportion of emissions) and b) can allow us to consider ways we could influence participant travel away from private car.

We received a total of 5,302 responses on travel patterns across 4 events.



**An average of 58% of people across the 4 events travelled by car**



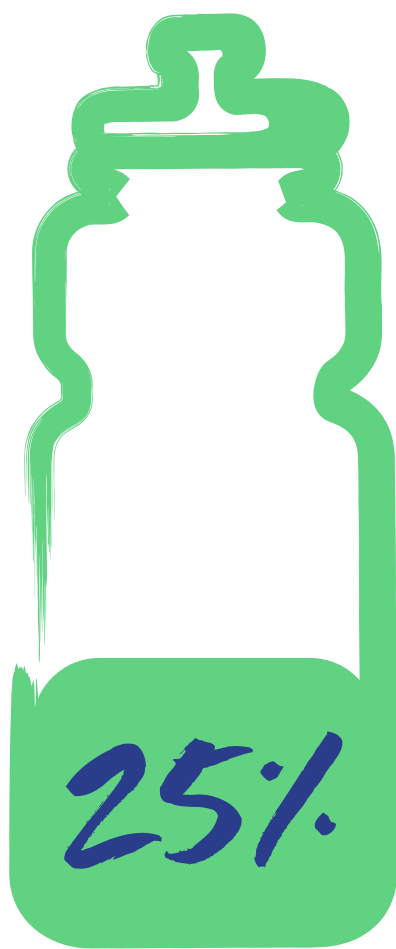
Water

In order to find out how many of our participants are already carrying some or all of their own water on events we asked:

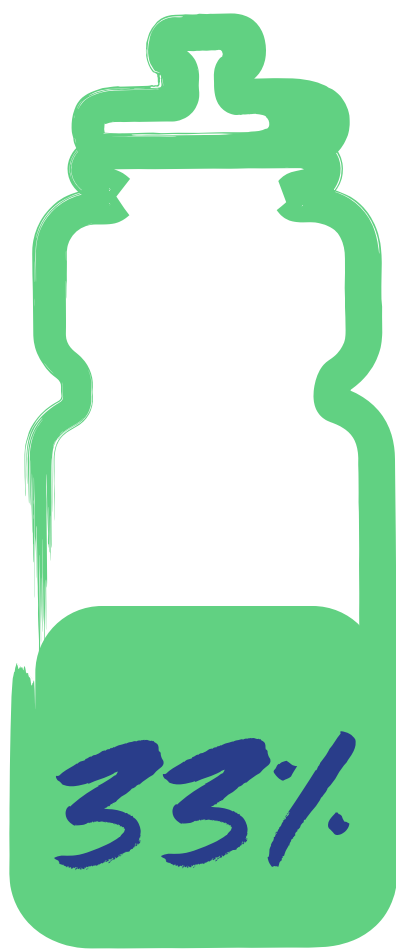
Did you carry your own water bottle or use a bottle belt or hydration vest when taking part in this event?

These figures show that there is merit in providing refill points for runners at the start and finish and along the route.

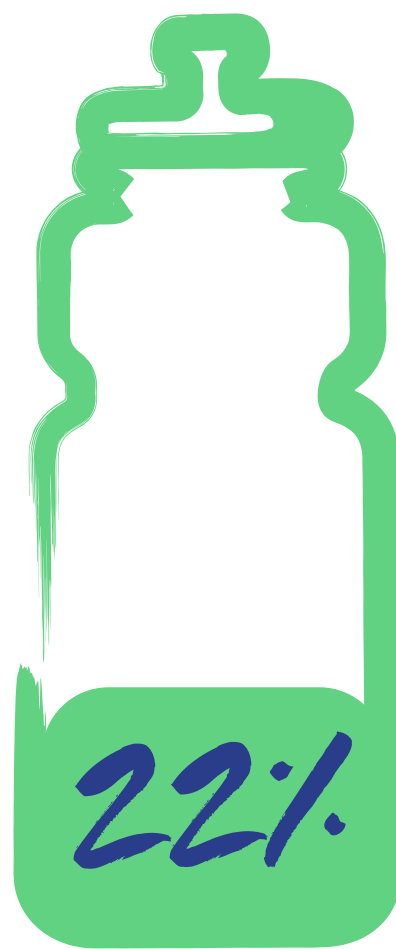
The Great North Run figures in particular are encouraging and show that for longer distances, many people train using a bottle belt and vest.



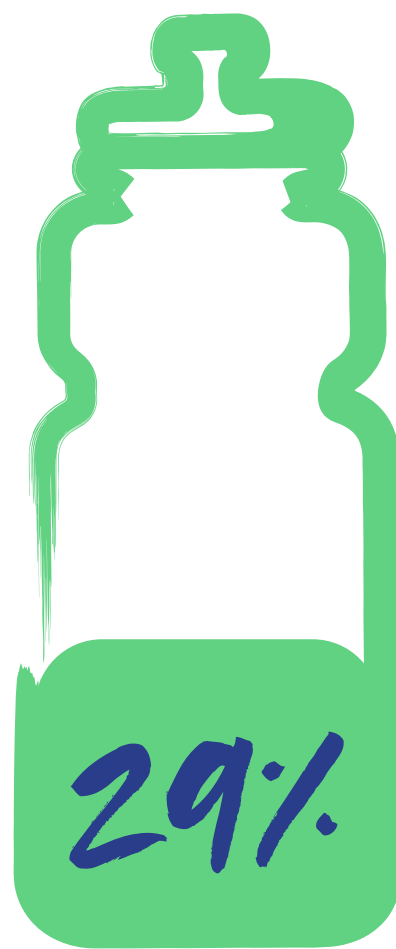
Great Bristol Run



Great North Run



Great Scottish Run



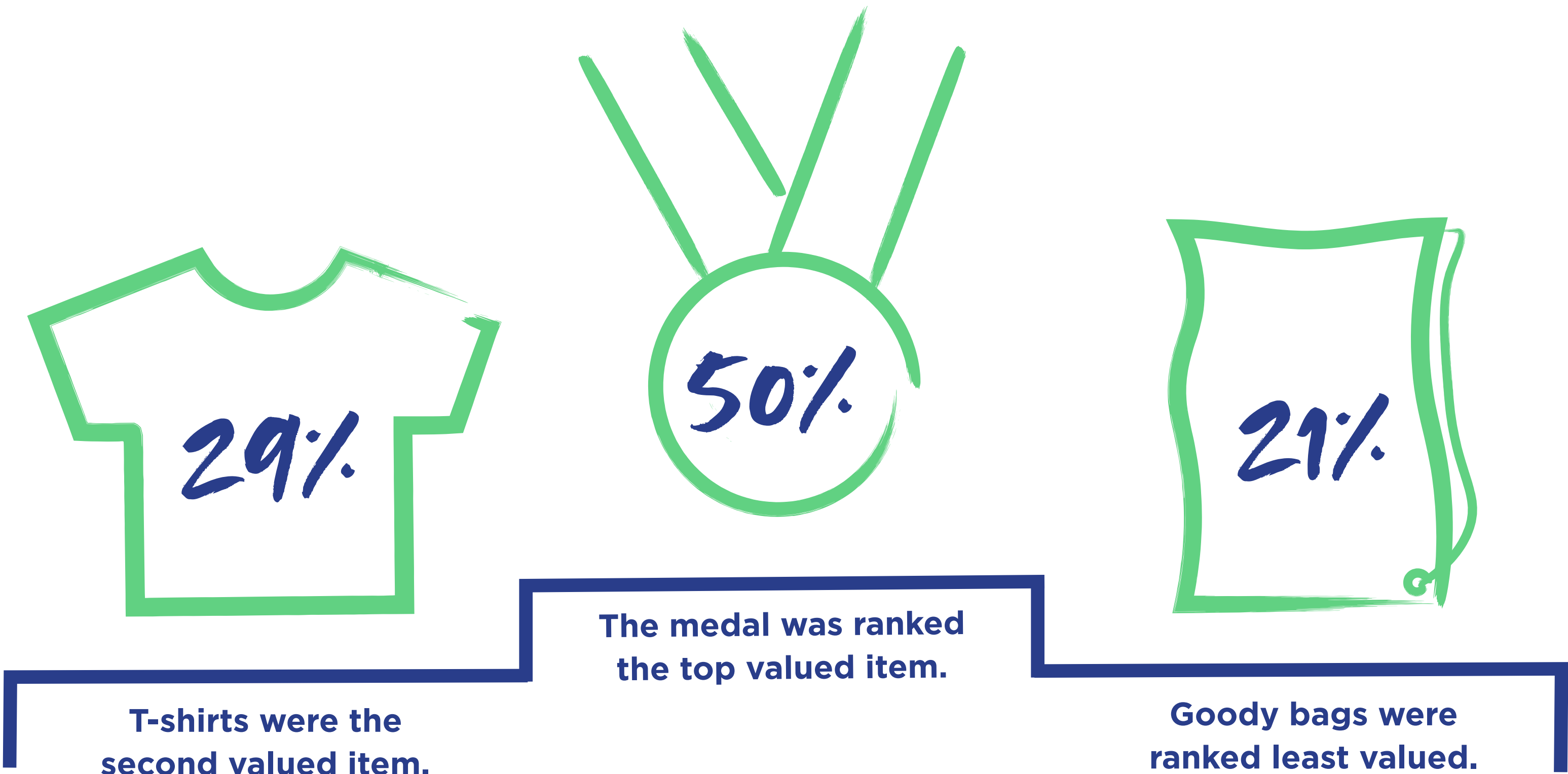
Great South Run



Product

We wanted to find out which of the products we give out are most valued by participants.

As you can see, across the 4 events surveyed, the medal was favoured over T-shirts and goody bags at each event as their most valued post- event item.





**Green Runner Option**

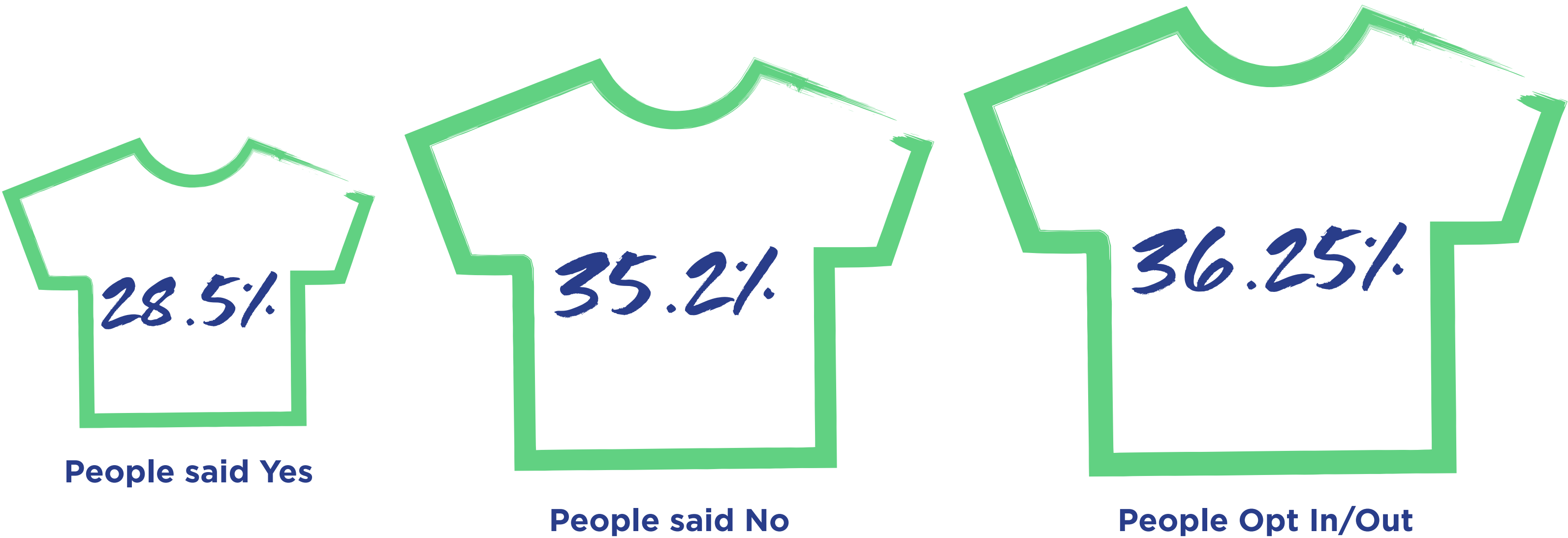
We asked:

**Would you be interested in a ‘green runner’ option, forgoing items like a t-shirt and goody bag in return for a more sustainable race experience?**

Answer options were:

- Yes - in return for e.g. tree planting or other offsetting scheme, free photographs, unique race number, different start pen/wave, bottle belt, opportunity to be an ambassador for sustainability measures
- No
- I would like to be able to opt in or out of medals and t-shirts

So a significant number would be happy to either forgo products entirely, or to be able to choose whether they get them.



For all events in 2023 we have implemented the ‘T-shirt Opt’ out at the finish of the event.

# Note ON DATA GAPS

Data collection started in earnest in late 2022. In 2023, we have made significant steps to focus on data capture, which includes working more closely with our external suppliers and contractors to gather a more complete picture on all data from our events.

Particular data gaps are:

- Staff travel (mode of travel and distance)
- Operational vans travel figures (type of van, fuel type, distance)
- Data on waste volumes
- Post-event participant data on travel, hydration and product preferences

This report does not include any data from Film Nova as this part of the business operates to the Albert sustainability framework and standard for TV and film production. We may wish to include Film Nova's activity and environmental performance into one report.

**For 2023 we will start using consistent data gathering templates and also collect data relating to our office and warehouse operations.**

**We will be including environmental-focussed questions in all of our post event surveys to help us gauge participant engagement with and response to the actions we take to reduce impact.**