



# ACCESS

Achieving Circularity in Cities through  
Environmental Sustainability of Sports

# CLUB CHARTER

## Embedding Sustainability Action



# ACHIEVING CIRCULARITY IN CITIES THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SPORTS

## D5.1: Signing & Launching a Club Charter

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### Abstract

*The Green Goals Charter is a key element of Work Programme 5 – Community Engagement and Outreach. The Charter articulates the main principles and objectives of ACCESS’s Community Engagement programme and supports the action-based approach of Deliverable 5.2. – A Manual for Community Engagement and Outreach. The adoption of a Green Goals Charter (i) makes sustainability commitments visible with a club (ii) promotes ownership of and pride in green actions and (iii) encourages accountability and provides a basis for programme review and renewal*

*Key elements of the Green Goals charter include an articulation of a club’s sustainability principles and objectives, a statement of specific goals, the endorsement of the club’s executive /committee and an alignment with national and international programmes and structures.*

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# 1. INTRODUCING THE ACCESS GREEN GOALS CHARTER

## 1.1 PURPOSE

The ACCESS partnership team developed a Green Goals programme as part of WP5 – Community Engagement and Outreach – to support and promote sustained and cyclical environmental sustainability engagement at grassroots club level. The Green Goals charter is the public expression of a club's sustainability commitments. As a public expression of a club's sustainability purpose and values, it has the three main functions of:

1. Communicating a club's sustainability commitments to the members, supporters and community
2. Promoting pride in and ownership of the club's sustainability agenda
3. Encouraging accountability for the maintaining of sustainability principles and the implementation of agreed club sustainability actions

### 1.1.1 Communicating Sustainability Commitments

The Green Goals charter is designed as a visually striking and succinct one page document that can easily displayed on the interior and/or exterior walls of a club house, posted on a club's website and shared across club social media channels. As detailed in Chapter 2, the charter contains three levels of information of the club's sustainability commitments:

- i. Statement of purpose and values
- ii. Ongoing principles and objectives
- iii. Current specific goals and projects

The charter therefore both effectively communicates the very face of a club's sustainability engagements to its members as

well as provides key information to members and other stakeholders in concise engaging and easily digestible form

### 1.1.2 Promoting Pride and Ownership

This outward and accessible expression of a club's sustainability commitments is in turn designed to promote pride and ownership within a club's membership and support base in and for the club's sustainability programme. This aim is realised through the very drafting and display of the charter itself and is additionally supported by a formatting that includes the logo of the national governing body as well as of the ACCESS project – linking the local to the national and international and emphasising how local actions are also part of a wider shared vision. That the charter is signed by the Club Chairperson (or equivalent) assists in embedding the Green Goal sustainability commitments within the broader club identity and context.

### 1.1.3 Encouraging Accountability

The Charter is designed to promote the cyclicity of the sustainability programme within the club; that is, that sustainability action be sustained and renewed rather than once-off or ad hoc. There are two primary elements within the Charter that encourage accountability and provide a basis for programme review and renewal. The first of these is the statement within the charter of two specific Green Goals that the club has committed to implementing, which ensures that the charter is not just a vague declaration of principles but is a focussed declaration of intent, underpinned by purpose and values. The second is that the charter is dated, ensuring full transparency of timing and intention. The Green Goals manual (Deliverable 5.2) contains further details on this,

## 1.2 MANUAL & CHARTER: COORDINATING AND COMPLEMENTARY DELIVERABLES

The success of any community engagement programme will depend on the programme being simple, accessible and streamlined – respecting the time of club officials, workers and volunteers. The outreach and community engagement phase of the project was developed as the final phase of the project where the participating sport organisations are required to act as multipliers in their countries as a reference sport organisation for improved environmental management in sports. The previous phases which saw study visits, interviews and KPI analysis, as well as a comprehensive training and education support covering an array of topics and fields of interest were supposed to raise the capacities and skills of those organisations to transmit and transfer that knowledge onto clubs participating in the Green Goals phase.

The phase and the programme was designed with the Charter integrated into an over-arching Green Goals structure – that of the five-step Green Goals Toolkit, as detailed in Deliverable D5.2, the Green Goal manual. Charter adoption is Step 4 of the five toolkit steps.

Therefore, this Charter comes slightly earlier than the Manual, as the onboarding and recruitment phase requires a document like this in order to explain clubs what a participation would imply and ensure successful adherence and competition of those clubs' upcoming tasks.

Those tasks will be defined after a scanning and baseline assessment and subsequent development of local Action plans for each adhered club.

In this way, the sustainability purpose and values as outlined in the Charter underpin the overall engagement and action structure and the Charter in turn reflects the approach and actions that are developed through the other.

## 1.3 CHARTER DEVELOPMENT

The GAA, whose own Green Club programme was established in 2020, had previous experience of club charter development and of working with community representatives and sustainability experts to produce a charter designed for the grassroots club context.

The development of the Charter started with the beginning of the phase it belongs to, at the project meeting in Dublin in April 2024 when the GAA also provided the training module on community engagement and outreach. Following that meeting and individual consultations with other participating sport organisations, the conclusions and remaining dilemmas were discussed in Copenhagen in September 2024 before the Charter would be finalised.

A fundamental principle of the Charter – and the Manual of which it is a part – was that the approach reflects the Plan-Do-Check-Act framework of sustainable project planning and continual improvement. For the ACCESS Green Club programme, the draft Charter content was first developed by the GAA Green Club team and then workshopped with all the ACCESS project partners at the transnational event in Copenhagen in September 2024 with the final charter text agreed by all partners the following month

## 2. CONTENTS OF THE GREEN GOALS CHARTER

In developing the Green Goals charter, the ACCESS partners were anxious that the document would effectively perform the dual functions of reflecting the overarching purpose and values of the programme and of supporting the community engagement objectives at grassroots level. The charter was thus designed across three sections:

1. Sustainability Purpose and Values
2. Fundamental Objectives and Principles
3. Club-specific content

### 2.1 PURPOSE & VALUES

*“We are committed to championing positive change in our club, for our community and for the planet. Through our club activities, we will unlock the potential of our game to drive positive change for society and the environment.”*

The Charter opens with a purpose and values statement that reflects both the aims and mission of the ACCESS project and the commitment of participating grassroots clubs. The language in the opening statement intentionally reflects the language of UEFA’s own sustainability statement, as the majority of partners in the current ACCESS project are ACCESS members, thus promoting a link with existing sustainability initiatives at UEFA level, while still being suitable for application and adoption across other sports.

### 2.2 FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

The body of the Charter is composed of seven key commitments, where a club commits to:

- Assessing their operations and processes and identifying opportunities to improve environmental management
- Embedding sustainability into planning and decision making, aligning it with the priorities of local and regional authorities
- Engaging club members and supporters in sustainability awareness and initiatives
- Regularly communicating sustainability actions to members and supporters
- Ensuring sustainability activities and projects are designed to be inclusive for club members of all backgrounds and abilities
- Supporting the sustainability programme of our sport’s governing body
- Aligning activities with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, recognising that tackling climate change and environmental degradation goes hand in hand with improving health and education,

Crucially, the first of these commitments is to assess operations and identify opportunities before engaging in action. This is made explicit in the Green Goals manual, but it was important for ACCESS partners to have this included in the Charter as a core principle of sustainability.

This confirms a principle that the project partners wanted to ensure – to have a Charter which doesn’t impose concrete solutions which

might be outside the signatories' capacities, but instead to ask the clubs to assess their operations, processes, capacities and skills and commit to actions they would define themselves with their respective project partners.

In the workshop in Copenhagen, ACCESS partners were also agreed on the importance of including references to key stakeholders in the charter text. These key stakeholders were the local authority or municipality at local level, the sports governing body at national level and the UN – specifically the UN SDGs – at international level.

Finally, while the Green Goals Charter is a statement of environmental sustainability commitment, it recognises, in line with the UN SDGS and the fundamental principles of sustainability, that environmental sustainability goes hand-in-hand with social and economic sustainability and make particular reference to ensuring that club sustainability activities are inclusive for club members of all backgrounds and abilities.

## 2.3 CLUB SPECIFIC CONTENT

The final section of the charter is designed for the charter to be adapted to the specific club context. There are three elements of this: (i) the inclusion of the club's two primary Green Goals (as developed and agreed through the five-step toolkit set out in the Green Club manual – D5.2); (ii) the signature by the Club Chairperson (or equivalent) – ensuring that the Green Goal commitments are supported from the top and centre of the club's organisational structuring and signalling to all that read the charter that this is a key club project and (iii) the date of charter signing, to promote accountability and to encourage review and renewal, as set out in the Green Goals Toolkit and the project Manual.

ACCESS partners have also produced versions of the charter in their national language and/or formatted to the national governing body identity, to creating a sense of ownership and belonging at both national and local level. They are listed in ANNEX I.

# ANNEX I: THE GREEN GOALS CHARTER AND TRANSLATIONS