



Green Sports Hub

Europe

Sustainability in European sports, leisure
and fitness organisations



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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE GREEN SPORTS HUB EUROPE

The Green Sports Hub Europe (GSHE) project was launched in February 2021 with an ambition to make the sport sector more sustainable and more green. The three-year project, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, sets four key pillars and a clear strategy. The project aims to test the potential of the sports sector as a high-profile and news agenda-driving industry and to be a channel for the societal behavioural change needed to make the European Green Deal a reality by focusing on good governance, so that leaders have the knowledge and skills to place environmental sustainability at the heart of their strategy.

GSHE will aim to be a support system for organisations to share knowledge and best practices, so that they can learn from each other and develop. By making use of experts, listening to the needs of the sector and equipping sports organisations and their events with the necessary tools, project partners will look to translate existing standards on environmental sustainability into concrete action, while aiming for the GSHE approach and tools to become a central component of sports organisation good governance.

The project is coordinated by Surfrider Foundation Europe (France), with project partners including;

- ▶ Association of Cities and Regions for the Sustainable Management of Resources (Belgium)
- ▶ Sports Confederation of Portugal (Portugal)
 - › ukactive (United Kingdom);
 - › Green Cycling Norway (Norway);
 - › Olympic Committee of Slovenia (Slovenia);
 - › European Volleyball Confederation (Luxembourg);
 - › Rugby Europe (France);
 - › European Athletics Association (Switzerland);
 - › EUSA Institute (Slovenia).

OBJECTIVE

Create an EU-level hub on sports and environment to help the sport sector identify its needs and potential actions for a greener and more sustainable future.



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents the results from the GSHE survey on sustainability carried out by ukactive. This project is one of the initial work streams that GSHE set out to complete over the three year period, with the outcomes and findings from this piece of work being used to inform and shape the direction of future work streams.

SURVEY OUTLINE

An online survey was created for completion by organisations from across Europe that operate in the sport, fitness and leisure sector. The survey was open for three months from August - November, and was distributed through GSHE networks as well as project partner networks within individual sports and countries.

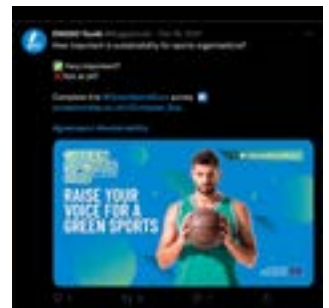
The survey was available in five different languages (English, French, Slovenian, Portuguese and Norwegian) and collected information on the type, size and location of organisations completing it. The survey also offered signposting to useful resources for individuals and organisations that wished to find out more about sustainability in the sector.

The main part of the survey asked questions around what sustainability meant to respondents, and whether they currently had any processes or procedures in place to actively focus on sustainability. It explored why this may or may not be the case and what the barriers towards acting on sustainability are.

The images below show some of the tweets used by partner organisations to promote the survey. Once the survey was closed the raw data was analysed by the ukactive Research Institute and used to produce this report.

Survey aims

- 1 Understand how important sustainability is for organisations across Europe.
- 2 Discover what the barriers and motivators are to being more sustainable.
- 3 Understand how organisations can be supported to be more sustainable.
- 4 Establish if organisations are measuring sustainability, and which policies or guidelines they follow.



ABOUT UKACTIVE



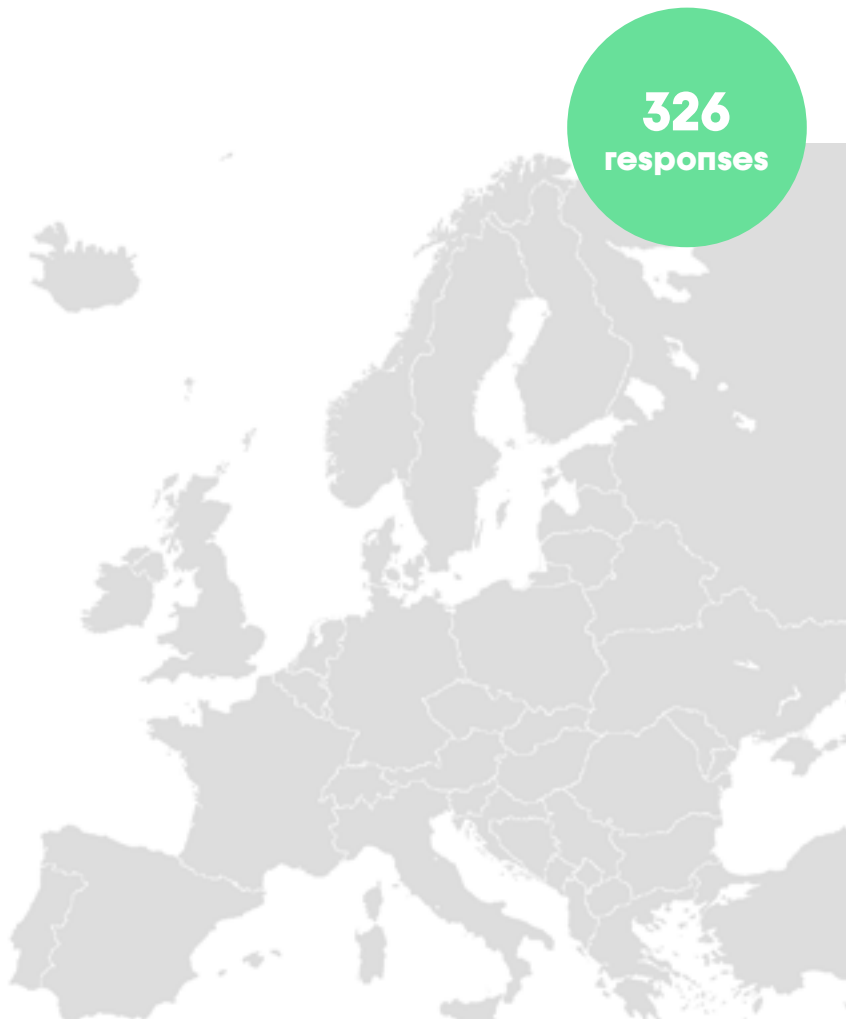
ukactive exists to improve the health of the nation by getting more people, more active, more often. ukactive provides services and facilitates partnerships for a broad range of organisations, all of which support our vision and have a role to play in achieving that goal.

We serve over 4,000 members and partners from across the public, private and third sectors, from multinational giants to local voluntary community groups. We do so by facilitating partnerships, campaigning and providing outstanding membership services.

RESPONSE OVERVIEW

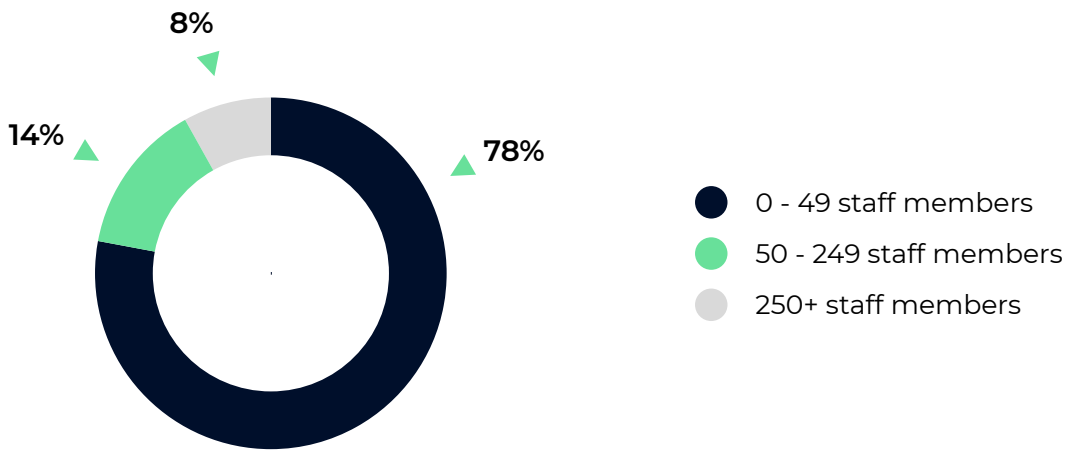
- ▶ Over 300 responses to the survey were received from organisations based across Europe that operate in the sport, fitness and leisure sector.
- ▶ The country with the most responses was France, which saw 25% of all responses. In total, over 45 different countries were represented within the data set.
- ▶ Organisations were mainly small, with over three quarters (78%) having less than 50 staff members.
- ▶ Just under half of organisations were professional sports club (16%) or governing bodies (30%), but the most frequently selected option for this question was 'other', which included educational institutes, coaching, media, events companies and organising committees.
- ▶ Seventeen different sports were represented, with volleyball, athletics, rugby and judo the most popular.

Organization location (n=326)

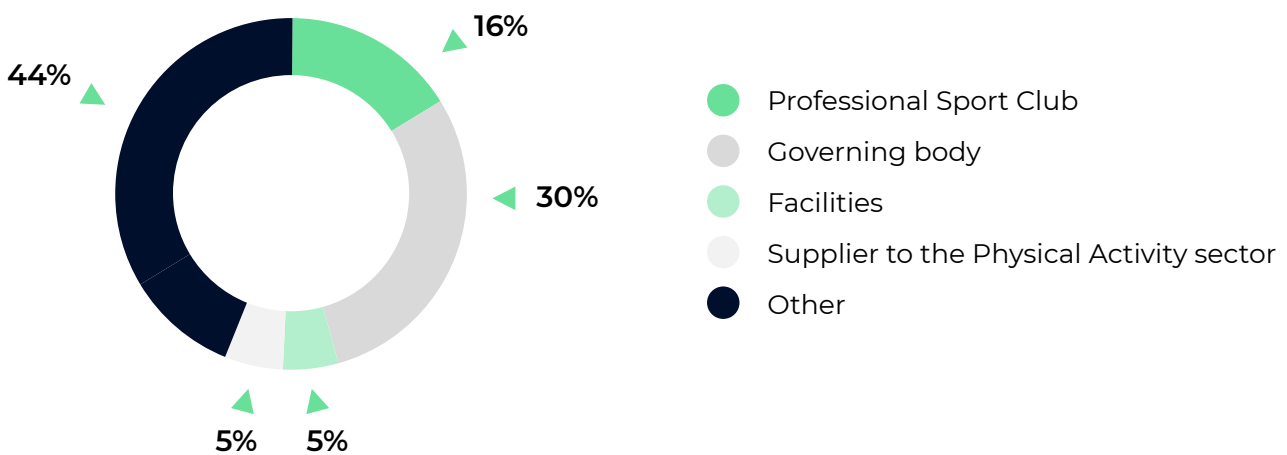


France	25%
Slovenia	17%
United Kingdom	6%
Italy	5%
Norway	4%
Belgium	3%
<p>+</p> <p>Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine & Uzbekistan</p>	


















Organisation size



Organisation type



Sport type

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
|  Artistic swimming |  Cycling |  Skating |
|  Athletics |  Football |  Skiing |
|  Basketball |  Judo |  Swimming |
|  Beach volleyball |  Rowing |  Table tennis |
|  Boxing |  Rugby |  Volleyball |
|  Canoeing |  Sailing | |

IMPORTANCE AND MEANING OF SUSTAINABILITY

- ▶ Sustainability has high importance for organisations across Europe, with over 60% agreeing that it was "extremely" or "very" important for them. Less than 1% of organisations felt it was not at all important.
- ▶ The sustainability credentials of suppliers were also viewed with importance, again with over 60% saying it was "extremely" or "very" important that their suppliers had a commitment to sustainability.
- ▶ When asked what they understood about the term "sustainability", there was a wide and varied collection of responses. Preserving both the natural environment and natural resources featured strongly, with many organisations expressing the opinion that saving energy and reducing waste were critical elements to being more sustainable.

What is your understanding of the word "sustainability" for the sector?

Organisations responses to this question fell into four key areas.

1 Preserving resources

- › Reducing waste
- › Saving energy
- › Reducing carbon footprint
- › Using recyclable materials

"Meeting current sector needs without compromising the needs of the future"

2 Preserving the environment

- › Reducing the use of chemicals
- › Protecting the environment where sporting activities take place

"Reducing the negative impacts of sporting activities/events on the environment"

3 Improving natural and man made surroundings

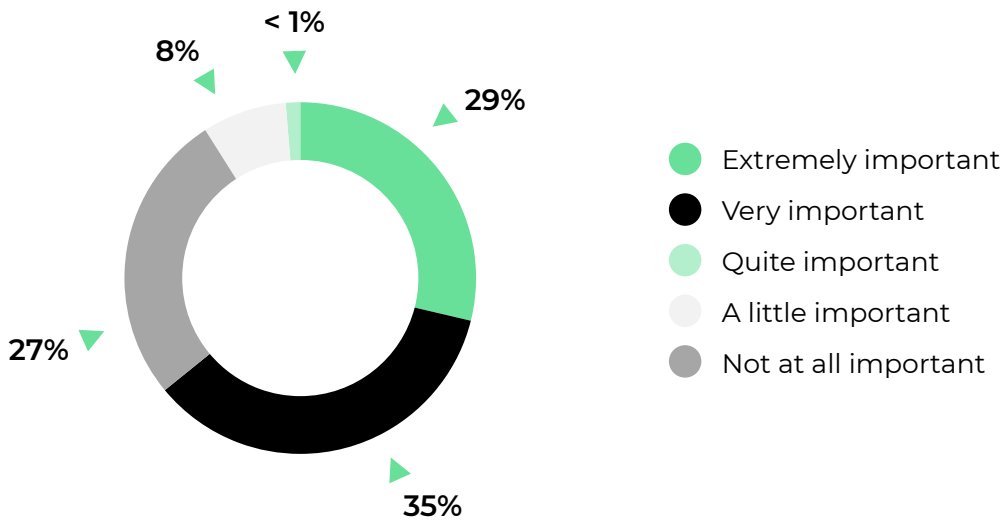
- › Increasing biodiversity
- › Creating better transport links
- › Modernisation of sports areas

"To encourage and support a responsible approach to environmental problems, to promote sustainable development in sport"

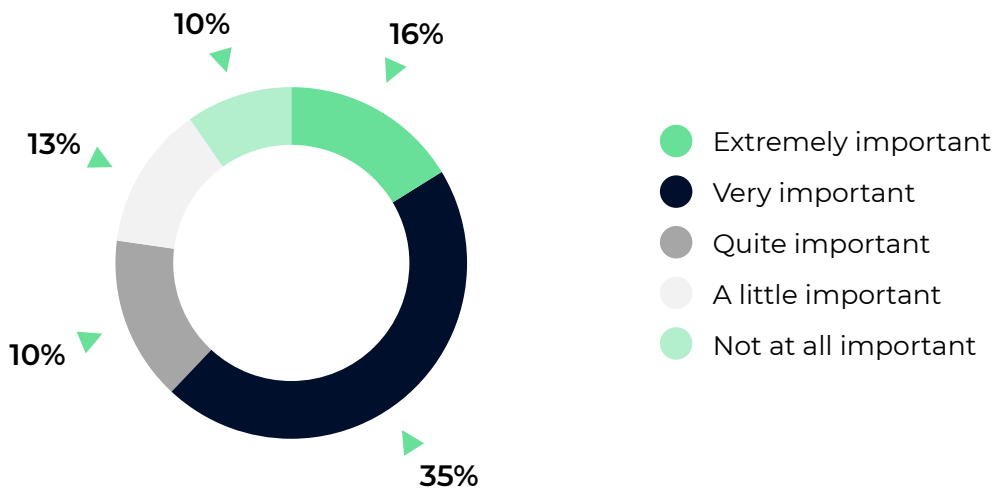
4 Planning for the future

- › Setting realistic and achievable targets
- › Dynamic planning, situation analysis and demand forecasting for the sector
- › Networking between different clubs, groups and organisations
- › Creation and promotion of best practice for the sector

How important is sustainability For your organisation ?



When buying new products, how important is it that the organisation you are buying from has a commitment to sustainability ?



BARRIERS AND MOTIVATIONS

- ▶ The main driver for organisations to work on their sustainability was the sense that it was the right thing to do, with nearly half of respondents selecting this as an option.
- ▶ Cost was seen as a big hurdle, with one quarter (26%) selecting this as the biggest barrier to adopting more sustainable practices.
- ▶ Subsequently, cost reductions were the most frequently selected option as an incentive to adopt more sustainable practices, with over half (59%) saying reductions would be encouraging.

What motivates you to work on your sustainability?



49%

It's the right thing to do



28%

Efficiency



19%

Image



20%

Financial savings



8%

Contracted by authority/governing body

OTHER MOTIVATIONS

- ▶ To improve the living conditions of coaches and athletes.
- ▶ Sport should be used as a 'vector of change' to raise awareness of these issues.
- ▶ To educate children about the need for sustainable development.
- ▶ To protect the environment, the planet, and living species for future generations.
- ▶ To have respect for natural resources and use them appropriately.
- ▶ For health, especially of young people.
- ▶ Personal responsibility.
- ▶ Social responsibility.
- ▶ There is no alternative.
- ▶ Company values.
- ▶ Organisation reputation.
- ▶ To inspire others.
- ▶ To help create global awareness.

What is currently preventing you from adopting more sustainable practices ?

Please select the biggest barrier.



OTHERS

- ▶ Organisations rely on volunteers ;
- ▶ Air travel is still a necessity ;
- ▶ Not enough organisational buy-in ;
- ▶ Not enough government regulation ;
- ▶ Changing process not cost effective ;
- ▶ Technology ;
- ▶ Organisational culture ;
- ▶ Difficulties in delivering across different countries ;
- ▶ Difficulty in calculating current carbon footprint ;
- ▶ Not a priority within organisation.

What could incentivise or encourage you to adopt more sustainable practices ?



OTHER FACTORS

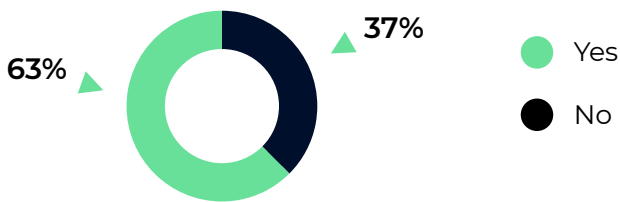
- ▶ Meaningful cash benefits and incentives.
- ▶ Knowing that it would enhance reputation and external perception of the organisation.
- ▶ Better mitigation of any risks.
- ▶ Resources specifically for voluntary and not-for-profit organisations.
- ▶ Mandatory standards set by national federations for specific organisations.
- ▶ Governmental standards for sector wide organisations which encourage sustainability.

MEASURES AND PROCESSES

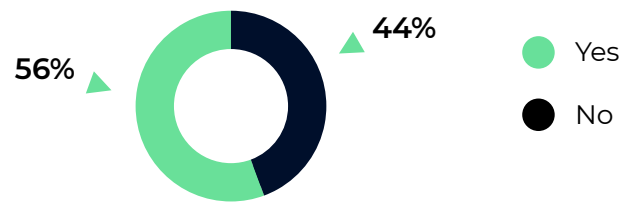
- ▶ Nearly two thirds of organisations (63%) had sustainability processes in place, with over half following published standards or policies. The policies being used were wide ranging, including country specific, pan European and global.
- ▶ Operations (e.g. energy use), events, and waste output were the areas that most organisations with sustainability processes focused on.

- ▶ Despite most organisations having processes in place, only one in five (22%) were measuring their sustainability. Those that did used a wide range of measures and metrics

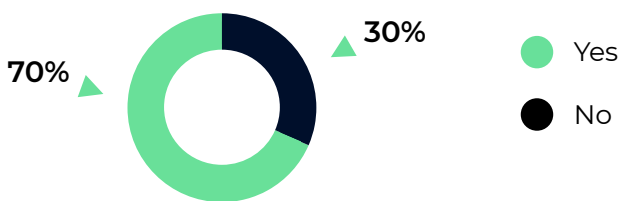
Do you currently have sustainability processes in place?



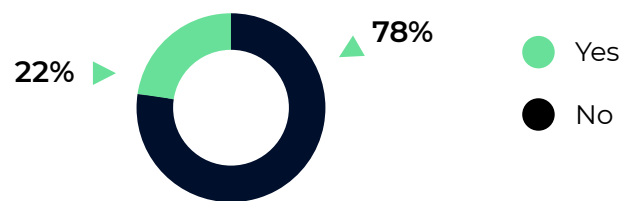
Do you follow any recognised standards/guidance/policy?



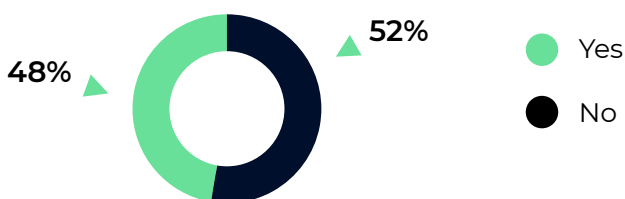
Are you aware of Government policies around sustainability?



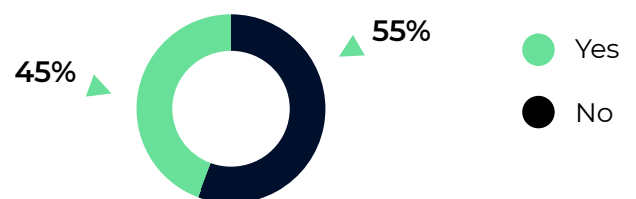
Do you measure if you are being sustainable?



Do you train your staff on sustainability?



Is sustainability discussed or reported at board/C-level meetings?



Areas of focus

For those who did have sustainability processes in place.



58%

Operations - usage



33%

Travel



56%

Events



56%

Output - waste



25%

Becoming
carbon neutral



17%

Building - design



37%

Purchasing products

POLICIES

- ▶ Governing Body guides (e.g. 8 Step Sustainability Guide of the European Athletics)
- ▶ B Corp standards
- ▶ Country specific policies (e.g. Environmental lighthouse (Norway), Esos compliance (UK), Green Club Programme (Ireland), Slovenia Green).
- ▶ IOC policies
- ▶ CSR policies
- ▶ Waste management policies
- ▶ Event specific policies
- ▶ FISU Healthy Campus Project
- ▶ Greenhouse Gas protocol
- ▶ GRI Standards
- ▶ PAS 2060
- ▶ REACH regulations
- ▶ Students 4 Climate Action
- ▶ Sustainable development goals (UN)
- ▶ ISO standards (14000, 20121, 26090, 26000, 14000, 14001, 50001, 20211)
- ▶ WHO's sustainability goals
- ▶ WWF sustainability guides
- ▶ UN Climate Pact for Sports
- ▶ UNFCCC Sport for Climate Action

MEASUREMENT

- ▶ Flight tracking
- ▶ Measurement of paper consumption
- ▶ Measurement of sick leave
- ▶ Measurement of carbon footprint
- ▶ Measurement of progress against energy reduction targets
- ▶ Measurement of waste and recycling
- ▶ Measurement by financial savings
- ▶ Measurement of purchases
- ▶ ISO certification audits
- ▶ Conducting surveys of clubs
- ▶ CSR committee
- ▶ ESS statutes
- ▶ Measuring energy usage
- ▶ Specialist data analysis service for sustainability

CONCLUSION

1 Sustainability is an important priority for organisations

The majority of organisations responding to the survey believed that sustainability was important, showing there is a keen appetite across the sector to contribute towards green practices and minimising the impact of sector activities on the environment. Definitions of sustainability tended to feature the themes of preserving natural resources and the environment, as well as planning for the future to ensure that sustainable practices that are embedded

now can contribute to a more sustainable sector in the future. Less than 1% of organisations believed that sustainability was not important at all. The commitment to sustainability went further than just the actions of their own organisations, with most believing that buying from suppliers with their own sustainability processes in place was important.

2 There is a strong sense that working to be sustainable is a moral duty

The main driver for acting in a sustainable manner was that it was 'the right thing to do', which received more responses than any financial or operational reasons. This shows there is the collective goodwill across the sector to play a part in the overall effort to improve sustainability, and whilst cost was

also viewed as an important factor it was not the predominate motivator. Again, the sense of providing for the future was seen as important, with the sport sector having the potential to be a leader in terms of promoting sustainable practices.

3 The barriers to being sustainable are varied and require further exploration

The barriers to acting more sustainably were varied, with different organisations having different opinions on what it is that is preventing them from adopting more sustainable practices. Whilst cost was the most frequently cited reason, this was only from one quarter of respondents. However, over half of respondents felt that cost savings would be an incentive to promote sustainability. Other key factors included lack of knowledge, with nearly half of respondents saying an increased knowledge

of sustainable practices would be useful. Other key barriers mentioned included getting full organisational buy in from all levels, especially senior management, which in turn could lead to the necessary culture shifts to embed sustainability in all areas. The variety of barriers that were given by respondents suggest that there is further work to be done in this area to pinpoint exactly what is required and what the sector can do to support the drive to improve sustainability.

4 An increased knowledge and understanding of how to be sustainable is required

Whilst the primary incentive for increasing an organisations contribution to a sustainable agenda was cost savings, the secondary motivation for encouraging sustainable practice was having increased knowledge on how to do this. Consumer campaigns were not viewed as an effective method

of driving sustainability by many respondents, suggesting the drive and pivotal action needs to come at an organisational level, and improving access to knowledge and resources about sustainability could help this.

5 Organisations are following processes and policies but these are varied

The majority of organisations had sustainability processes in place, and were aware of policies and standards surrounding this. There was a huge variety of different types of policy and standard that were being used, with a range of local, national, European and global standards being followed.

There seemed to be little consistency in which of these were used most frequently. The policies in place included guidelines for waste management, events, greenhouse gas emissions, and sport specific areas.

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