RCA

Showcase & Awards 2025

Ascot Racecourse

Racing Foundation Green Award - Racing to Zero Summer Mile Racing Weekend

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Objectives

In 2022, Ascot Racecourse published its ‘Racing to Zero’ strategy, setting out the ambition of becoming Net Zero by 2040. To achieve that target, and in line with our commitments to the UN Sport for Climate Action Framework, we started by focusing on Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, increasing recycling rates and reducing energy consumption. The main challenge though to meet the Net Zero target is Scope 3, indirect emissions including racegoer travel, horse transport, employee commuting and business travel. In 2023, racegoer travel made up 37.72% of all our carbon emissions and so a particular focus in 2024 and 2025 has been on how we can reduce this figure. As part of this work, linked to our community outreach programme, Ascot Racecourse Supports, we have engaged students from Surrey University to explore how we can reduce our Scope 3 emissions and their subsequent report has been crucial in developing proactive plans.

To kickstart this work, we trialled a ‘sustainable raceday’ in September 2024, testing ideas and concepts on how we could change customer behaviour, track useful data and raise awareness. For 2025, we wanted to take this to the next level and so we dedicated our entire Summer Mile Weekend, a two-day meeting in July, to sustainability.

Crucially, this was not intended to be a completely sustainable, Net-Zero race weekend which would have involved offsetting. Rather, this was a sustainability-focused meeting and so the objectives were:

- Increase awareness among racegoers of our sustainability strategy and ambitions.
- Showcase sustainability initiatives to educate racegoers.
- Collect real-life data and insights from customers to understand what we can do to influence behaviour.
- Increase engagement numbers on the previous trial weekend in 2024.
- Promote best practice and celebrate sustainability champions within the business.
- Involve our community and focus on local suppliers.
- Engage sponsors/suppliers/partners to bring them on the journey with us.

Delivery

To ensure maximum exposure and awareness, the two-day meeting was renamed as the Racing to Zero Summer Mile Racing Weekend. This was promoted on all advertising as well as across digital and social media content. Two race titles were also used to promote sustainability programmes and staff members who had won Green Crown Awards during Royal Ascot were selected to present the trophies.

On-site activations across the two days included:

- Travel Green, Race Free – anybody travelling by train, bus, electric car, bike or walking could claim a free ticket for a future raceday at Ascot.
- ‘The Dream Horse’ – an upcycled sculpture made from recycled materials including racecards, badges and wine corks. Created by children from four local special educational needs schools in partnership with creative charity, Busy Buttons.
- Launch of a fully electric community transport bus to be operated by local charity *People to Places (P2P),* funded by Ascot Racecourse Supports. P2P also provided an accessibility shuttle bus from the station to the racecourse to ensure there were no barriers to people using the train rather than driving.
- Plan Bee activation so racegoers could learn more about the Ascot beehives located on the Heath and their positive impact on the environment.
- Grundon, our waste management and recycling partner, ran two stands, one featuring their electric vehicle powered by non-recycling waste collected at Ascot and another with an interactive game.
- Sustainability Pledge Board on the Cedar Tree Lawn where racegoers could outline their environmental commitments using grass/seed paper post-it notes.
- Sustainability hub where information about Ascot’s Racing to Zero programme and details about sponsors/suppliers’ sustainability actions could be found.
- Staff initiatives included adding food waste bins to rest areas and more plant-based options in the raceday canteen.
- ‘Ballot bins’ where racegoers could recycle racecards, tickets and badges on exit with big screen displays to encourage recycling.

Results

As well as anecdotal, on the day feedback, a crucial part of the weekend was to gather direct feedback through post-raceday surveys.

Specific questions within the post-raceday surveys focused on sustainability and the answers provided fantastic insight for us to use in the future.

Total budgetary spend on sustainability initiatives across the weekend was £5,000 and the return was significant. Set against the core objectives, the results were:

Increasing awareness – 17% of attendees visited the activations. With a total attendance on the two days of 19,229 that roughly equates to 3,200 people that engaged with some element of the sustainability initiatives, helping to increase awareness of Ascot's green credentials.
Showcasing sustainability – All the activations were engaging and insightful, educating racegoers about our own commitments and wider sustainability considerations.
Data and insights – 70.4% of survey respondents said being incentivised to travel in a more sustainable way would make them choose public transport over their car. This is not only a significant percentage of the crowd but also crucial insight into how we can influence behaviour in the future to make people consider more sustainable travel options.
Increase engagement – 42% of survey respondents said they were aware of the Travel Green, Race Free initiative, highlighting the success of the idea. 235 people requested tickets for a future raceday, and this is something that we are likely to rollout across more racedays.
Celebrate champions – Four members of our stewarding staff were selected to present the trophies for the Recycle Your Racecard Handicap Stakes, rewarding their contributions to Ascot's Net Zero journey and engaging the workforce in our strategy.
Involve our community – Local cricket and football clubs ran activities for young racegoers alongside charity, Sport in Mind. All supplier activations were locally sourced as with all food/drink providers.
Engage partners – Cornish Orchards Cider, Harrogate Water and Lavazza Coffee all provided content for the sustainability hub and supported our ambitions for the weekend.

Supporting Information

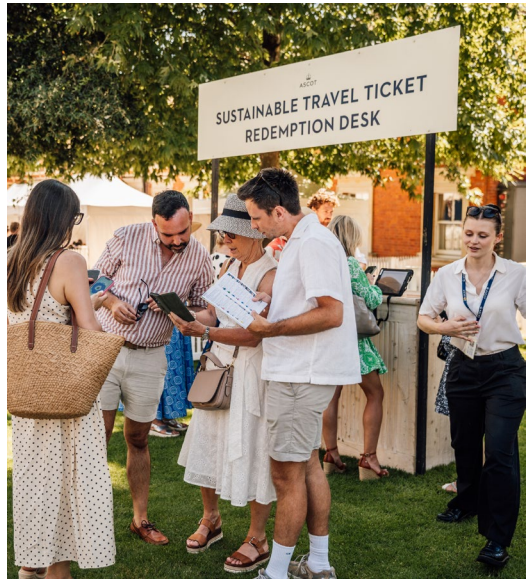
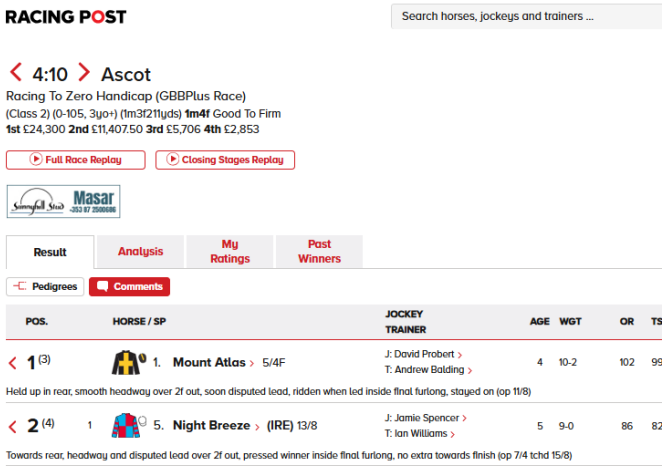
Racegoer feedback:

“Not using a car was an excellent idea and 20 of us all walked the 3+ miles home instead of taxis.”

“I like the removal of one-use plastics and the more locally sourced food items!”

“The sustainable travel initiative was a great idea, to get people to come racing and important to make young generation aware of those topics.”

"We had our photo taken on The Dream Horse and thought it was a great installation.”



Grundon YouTube shorts video showcasing their activations - https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Xkt-N-CGMCk