



# York

RACECOURSE



## YORK RACECOURSE ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

That which we do today  
will echo through the  
centuries

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# INTRODUCTION



"York Racecourse has been an important part of the sport of horseracing and of the City of York for nearly 300 years and we are committed to ensuring that it continues to play a positive role in both of these communities, for at least another 300 years.

We are acutely aware of the serious challenges facing the world around climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion and water shortages and that is why we have been working hard, especially since 2017, to reduce our negative impact and find ways to support the environment.

From our carbon footprint and the stewardship of our acreage, to the management of water and waste, we have embedded sustainability into our operations for these five years. Now in 2023, we are proud to launch our environmental strategy, recognising what we have achieved to date and committing to ambitious plans for the future.

As a sign of our determination, York Racecourse has become a signatory to the UNFCCC Sports for Climate Action initiative, becoming the first independent racecourse to do so."

~Bridget Guerin, Chairman

~William Derby, Chief Executive & Clerk of the Course

## Background

York Racecourse stands in approximately 100 acres of land, divided between farmland, car parks, the racing surface itself and our associated buildings, lawns and paddocks. Some of our land is freehold but the majority is leasehold under a 99 year lease from the City of York Council. The centre of the Knavesmire itself inside of the racing surface is managed and controlled by the City of York Council.

Racing first started on the Knavesmire in 1731, making York one of the oldest racecourses in the world, as we approach our 300 year anniversary in 2031. The racing action spans eighteen racedays from May to October, with the Ebor Festival as our flagship festival in August.

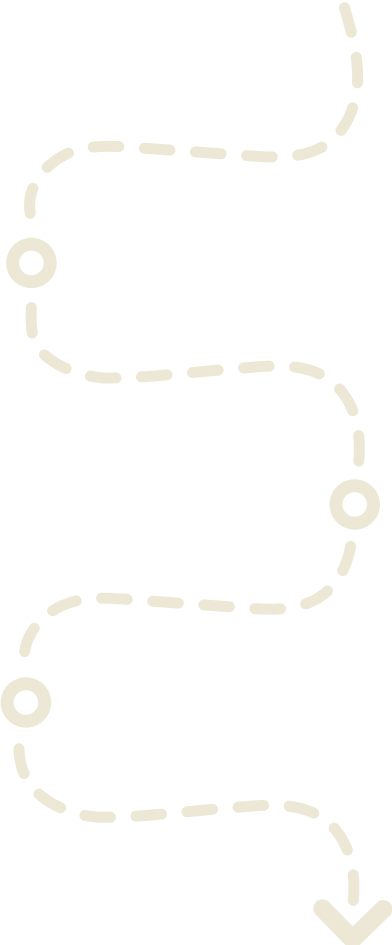
Our grandstands, buildings, Stableside accommodation and activities, all have an environmental impact and we are committed to a long-term plan to deliver a positive footprint through our operations.

While responsible stewardship of the Knavesmire has always been important, we began making concerted changes in 2017. This strategy continues that work.



In creating our strategy, we have worked with our colleagues and stakeholders to build a vision that sits alongside our plans for the business as a whole, in order that goals can be achieved in harmony with our racing, operational and financial objectives.

2017



2022

# THE STORY SO FAR

Situated in the heart of Yorkshire, the Knavesmire, on which the Racecourse is located, has been synonymous with equine talent and some of history's most enthralling races since 1731.

Our mission is to host the best racing action whilst delivering the best racegoer experience. We shall strive to achieve this in as sustainable a way as possible.

We are proud of our near 300-year heritage, proud of our stewardship of the environment in which York Racecourse stands and proud to now chart our direction for at least the next 300 years.

Climate change presents a significant risk to our home, our sport and our community. As an organisation and as individuals, we recognise the urgent need for action and to do right by the planet by reducing our environmental impact.

The York Race Committee and every member of the York Racecourse management team has committed to supporting our environmental goals, across energy and emissions, biodiversity, water management, waste and resource use. Together, we have been able to deliver real change in just five years.





## Energy and emissions

**Determined to reduce our electricity and gas consumption, we installed a comprehensive Buildings Management System (BMS) at the start of 2018 which has enabled both the immediate reduction in, and ongoing management of, our Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions.**

**Since 2018, we have reduced electricity across the site by 35% by reducing what we use to only what we need, this is despite our activity level increasing.**

**Our gas consumption reduced by 80% as we focussed our attention on efficiencies in the heating of the buildings and kitchen areas.**

Whilst the BMS system enables us to manage and measure these reductions on an ongoing basis, it is our regular staff training and engagement that has made the difference. The team at York fully understand the need to not be wasteful with our resources and, through regular training and updates, we ensure that switching off and planning utilities use, is at the forefront of everyone's minds.

In 2015, we also upgraded our mains infrastructure, in order that we have only a small requirement for generators to be utilised. For example when lighting the car parks, we do so only if needed.

We have also begun the vehicle electrification process including the installation of two charging points at our Stableside accommodation, with a further six now available for visitors to the main site.

80%

35%



# Water

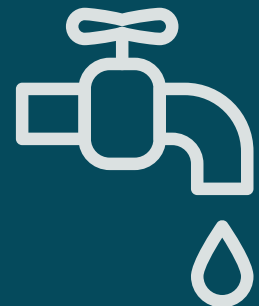
**Our racing operations depend on the ability to have daily access to water. The irrigation of the track, watering of plants, drinking and washing water for horses, washroom facilities at our accommodation block and all of the toilets and kitchen facilities within the Racecourse itself require water.**

**As part of our commitment to the Leisure Operator Water Charter, we have put in place a number of measures to minimise our consumption and in doing so, reduce pressure on the mains water supply.**



We have installed two boreholes on site which provide all of the water we need to irrigate the Racecourse, from the natural aquifer 100 metres beneath the main car park. This means that we are able to significantly reduce the amount we extract from mains supply.

Within our stands, we have invested in technology to reduce our water consumption, including waterless urinals, smart pumps, improved flushing systems and sensor taps.



Horse welfare is fundamental to all we do. By carefully monitoring our consumption and using boreholes to extract the majority of our water, we are able to maintain our racing surface and provide the horses with what they need in a safe and responsible way.



## Plastics

We are committed to seeking to eliminate single use plastics from our racecourse and to date we have replaced all of our cutlery with wooden alternatives and our wine and soft drinks are now sold in glass and by the can rather than plastic bottles.

Our drinks containers are made from recycled plastic whilst we transition to other alternatives. We have provided drinking water fountains throughout our venue and encourage our racegoers to bring reusable bottles to fill directly from the fountain, or avail of the tap water provided free at every main bar.

The white plastic running rail at racecourses is essential for the safety of horse and rider and needs regularly replacing. We have worked with our supplier Duralock, to ensure all old running rail is collected for reprocessing and can confirm that all new running rail uses 91% recycled materials.

We are a 'zero waste to landfill' venue. In addition to our general waste management, our food waste is separated and sent for energy recovery and our green waste is compacted and composted.

As a local example of the circular economy, our paper waste is also shredded and returned to us as bedding for the horses.

Used cooking oil from our kitchens is also not wasted as it is turned into biofuel.



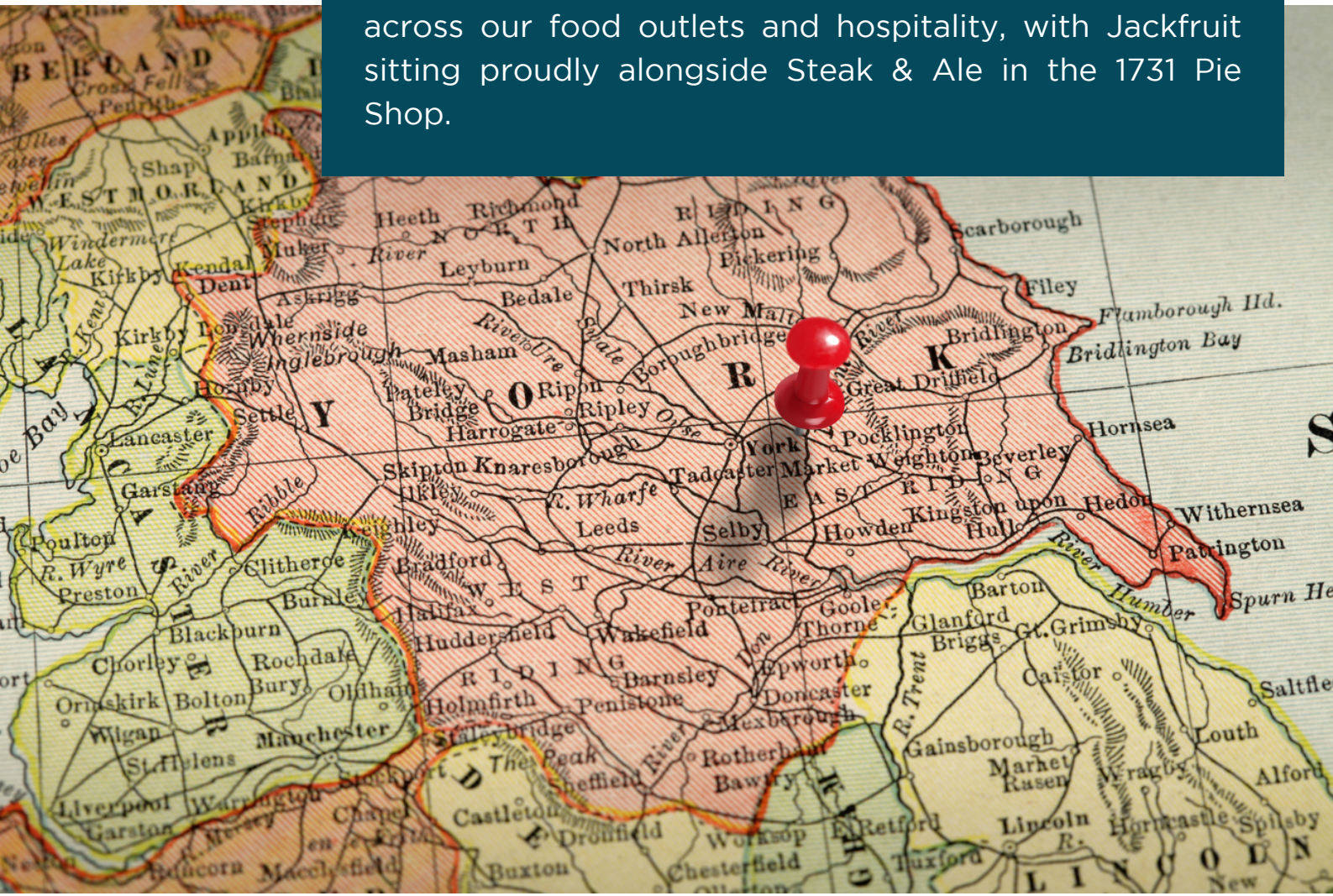
## Resources and waste

## Food and drink

As a proud Yorkshire business, it has always been important to us that we support local producers and the environmental benefits of a shorter “field to fork” journey are a positive part of that. As part of our commitment to sourcing as much of our food as locally and as seasonally as possible, we have a ‘Yorkshire when best’ policy, enjoying food items from local growers and keeping the food miles of our catering low.

As just one example, our pork pies and sausages are made within a mile of the racecourse, using locally reared meat.

We also provide vegetarian and plant-based options across our food outlets and hospitality, with Jackfruit sitting proudly alongside Steak & Ale in the 1731 Pie Shop.



## Biodiversity and land use

**Land stewardship has been at the forefront of our work every year for the past 300 years and will remain so in the future. We have a dedicated, award-winning team of ground staff and gardeners who are committed to protecting the 100 acres of which we are custodians.**

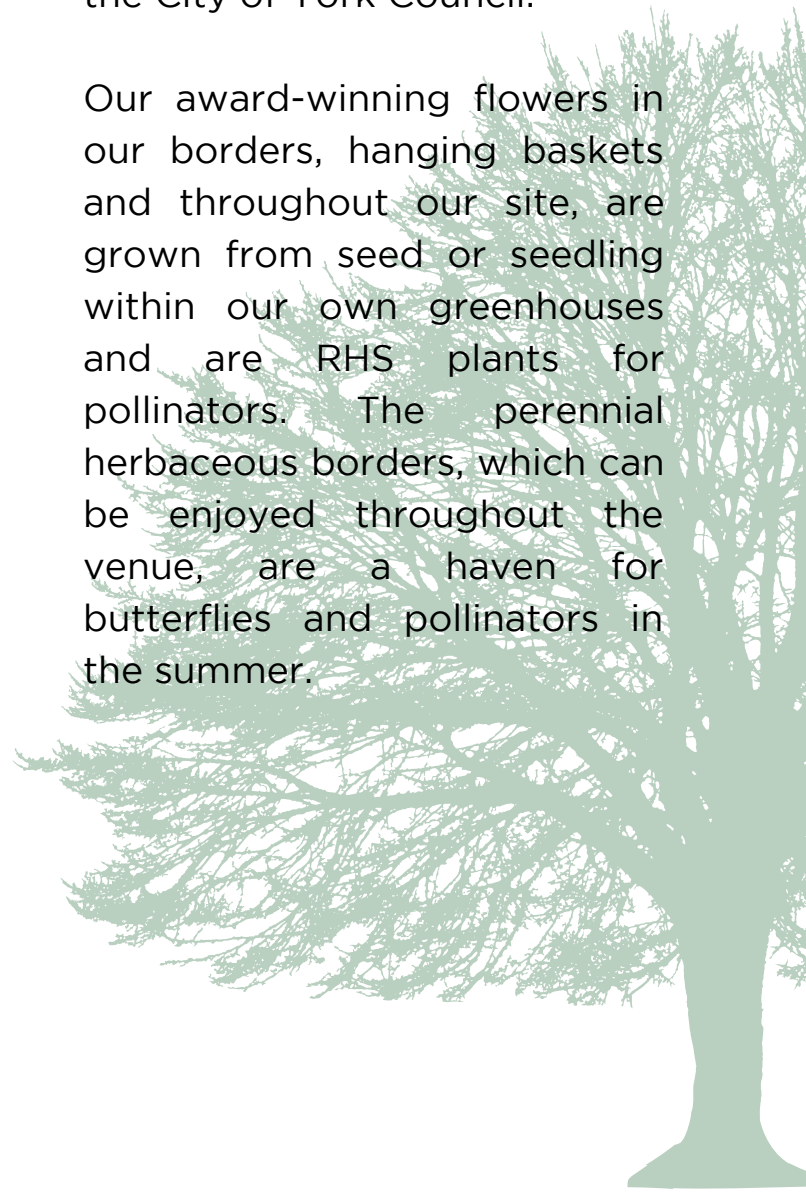
In addition to the racing surface itself, our venue is a combination of lawns, flower borders, grass car parks, hedgerows, farmland and trees, so we understand that stewardship of such land requires a long-term view.

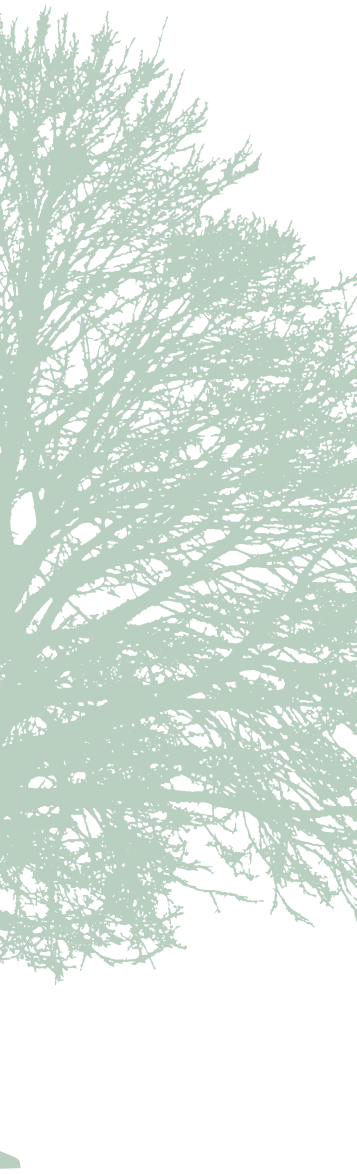
Soil protection and enhancement is crucial to our turf and we work in harmony with nature to produce the best racing surface on which the horses perform. To give an example, the York team was one of the first to adopt liquid seaweed bio stimulant, as an alternative to synthetic fertilisers.

The planting of trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy in 2022 was the most recent example of our husbandry, meaning the site is home to a host of native trees and plants which provide natural habitats.

We are also home to a Site of Importance for Natural Conservation (SINC) owing to the presence of a threatened broad-leaved species which we protect in consultation with the City of York Council.

Our award-winning flowers in our borders, hanging baskets and throughout our site, are grown from seed or seedling within our own greenhouses and are RHS plants for pollinators. The perennial herbaceous borders, which can be enjoyed throughout the venue, are a haven for butterflies and pollinators in the summer.





# MEASURING OUR IMPACT

In 2022, we progressed to the next stage of our environmental plans, by undertaking a review of our overall impact through our carbon footprint, as well as evaluating our performance in regard to water conservation, enhancing biodiversity and our handling of waste and resources.


Through this work by independent consultancy, White Griffin, we were better able to pin-point the key areas of our operations that produced the largest greenhouse gas emissions, and, quantify where we have already made some significant reductions.



**75%**  
Reduction in our Scope 1  
emissions from 2017 to 2022



**58%**  
Reduction in our Scope 2  
emissions from 2017 to 2022

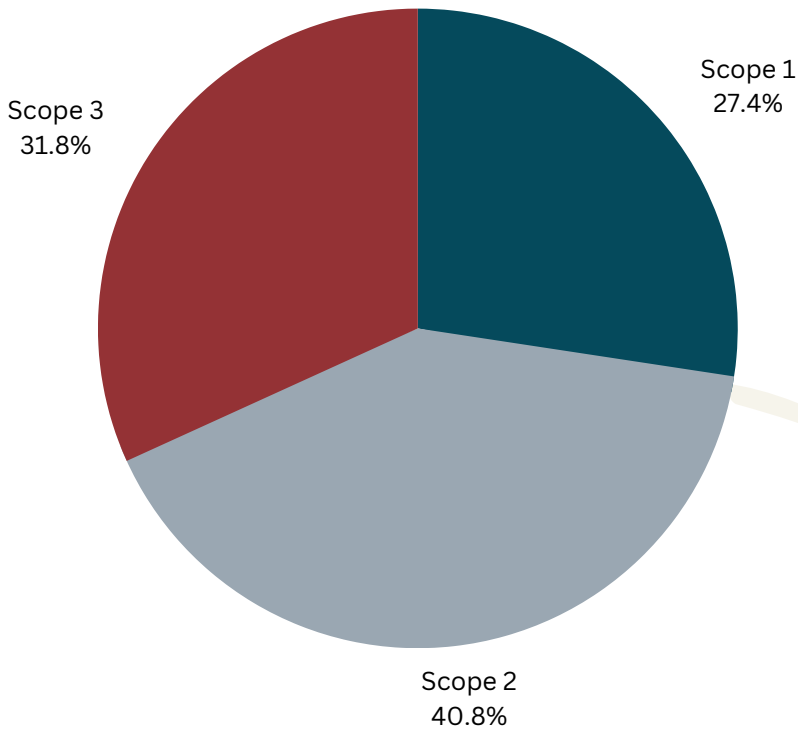


**21%**  
Reduction in our Scope 3 carbon  
emissions from 2017 to 2022



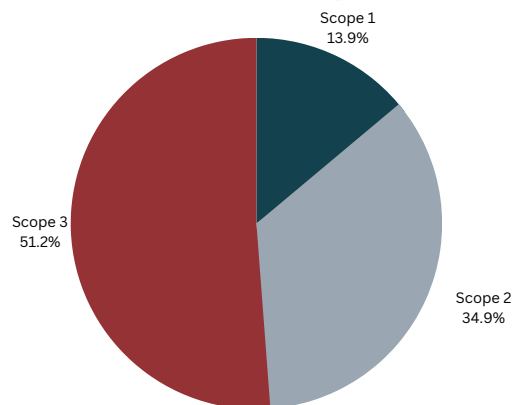
**51%**  
Reduction in our total carbon  
footprint from 2017 to 2022

# 2017



Due to our work to date, we have reduced emissions by 66.5% in scope 1 and 2 combined.


# 2022



And shrunk our overall footprint by half, 8 years ahead of the science based target for net zero.

Our carbon footprint includes all aspects of our operations and we now understand the largest contributors to be our use of gas within our scope 1, our purchased electricity in scope 2 and within scope 3, our fuel and energy related activities and purchased goods and services. Based on this, we have created a roadmap to reduce our emissions significantly as part of our overall strategy.

## Scope 'F'



In addition to our core operations, we are aware that, in common with most sports and leisure venues, the travel and transport of our racegoers will likely have a significant carbon footprint. In carbon management terms, this is referred to as 'Scope F' (the 'F' referring to fans in the context of sport and entertainment, our racegoers).

Therefore, we are committed to measuring this impact going forward and devising strategies to reduce the emissions resulting from racegoer travel.

'Scope F' is a challenge to the whole sports and entertainment industry and working across multiple stakeholders, we will play our part in supporting greener travel infrastructure.



We benefit from being a well connected city to the national rail infrastructure with many racegoers choosing to visit by train and then either walk or take a shuttle bus (some of which are already electric) the mile from the railway station to the Racecourse.

We have large, free coach parks and we have facilities to encourage shared or sustainable transport. An expanded provision of bike racks has proved popular. A programme of investment in EV charging points means that Stableside users have access to two units, with a further six across at the main site.

Measuring our racegoer travel will enable us to understand what we need to do next.



## Scope 'H'

Unique to equine sport is the transportation of horses. Owing to the nature of the vehicles required to safely move horses around the country, we understand that this activity will have a significant carbon 'hoofprint' and therefore should be identified within its own scope ('H', referencing 'horse'.)

Whilst the emissions from these vehicles, as with the emissions of our racegoers, falls outside of our officially measured operations, we recognise the importance of addressing this issue as part of a wider industry strategy.

We are committed to participating in working groups and implementing any measures that will support jockeys, owners and trainers in minimising their footprint whilst attending York Races.



The equine environmental sustainability consultancy, White Griffin, have termed this 'Scope H' in order to characterise the specific nature of this challenge to the industry.

# OUR VISION

Proud of our green agenda, proud to call the Knavesmire home, proud to have done so for 300 years.

Committed to doing the right thing for our horses, our people and our planet for 300 more.

We are passionate about  
**GREEN KNAVESMIRE 300.**





We are proud of the work we have carried out to date and, in 2023, we are committed to driving forward in our environmental goals. Therefore, we have laid out a new vision which underpins our roadmap into 2040 and beyond.

We know that in order to enjoy a future that includes world-class horse racing, we need to minimise our negative impact on the environment, conserve precious resources and maximise our potential to have a positive impact through our land stewardship and biodiversity improvements.

We are the sport of the land and the way in which we take care of it defines us. Therefore, our undertaking is to set our own high standard in managing York Racecourse responsibly, ensuring that future generations can continue to enjoy racing at this wonderful place for centuries to come.

# THE STRATEGY

Since 2017, we have made considerable changes to our operations to get us to where we are today, with a 50% reduction in our carbon footprint. We have ambitious plans for the future. Our project, Green Knavesmire 300, focuses on four key pillars which will enable us to achieve our bold vision.

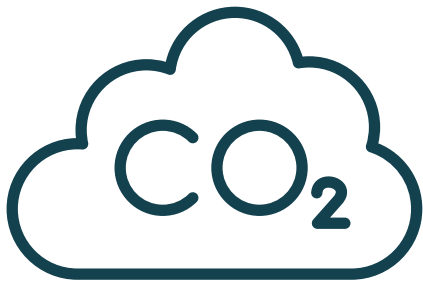
**Net Zero by  
2040**

**Enhance  
biodiversity**

**Conserve  
water**

**Embrace  
the circular  
economy**





## Net Zero by 2040

We will address all areas of our emissions and build a plan that will reduce our scope 1, 2 and 3 to Net Zero by 2040.

We will address our scope F emissions by measuring, monitoring and supporting sustainable transport options for our racegoers.

We will support an industrywide strategy in tackling scope H.

We will undertake several projects with the specific goal of enhancing biodiversity on our site, making ever more space for nature.

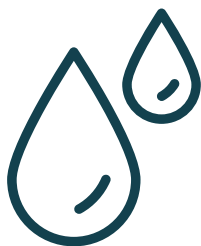
We will engage in appropriate tree planting schemes, as well as hedgerows, in order to support carbon sequestration and creating new habitats for wildlife.

We will plant a wild-flower meadow and increase our plants for pollinators.

We will add beehives to our spaces.



## Enhance biodiversity



## Conserve water

We will seek to further reduce the volume of water taken from mains supply and put in place a water management system to make further savings year-on-year.

We will add rainwater harvesting to our new buildings and replace bathroom facilities with new efficient systems during their upgrade cycle.

We will eliminate single use plastic from our venue.

We will improve our waste management plans to increase our volume of recycling, composting and repurposing.

We will put in place operational systems to value our resources and make environmental procurement choices.



## Embrace the circular economy

# OUR COMMITMENT

**We have solidified our environmental commitments by becoming the first independent racecourse to sign up to the UNFCCC Sport for Climate Action. By adopting the targets within the framework, we are signed up to the Race To Zero global campaign.**

## UNFCCC Sport for Climate Action Principles

- 1: Undertake systematic efforts to promote greater environmental responsibility;
- 2: Reduce overall climate impact;
- 3: Educate for climate action;
- 4: Promote sustainable and responsible consumption;
- 5: Advocate for climate action through communication.



Our roadmap for change continues the work achieved to date across all four pillars of activity and we are committed to further emissions reductions in order to achieve Net Zero by 2040 in line with the Race to Zero.



We understand the role sport has to play in supporting substantial change in our collective efforts to tackle the climate emergency. As the second biggest sport by attendance in the UK, we recognise that our potential to influence change is significant. Therefore, we will put in place a thoughtful programme of education for our racegoers and stakeholders, to enable them to support our climate goals as well as impact behaviour change.



We commit to communicating our journey through storytelling and reporting our progress year on year, as we progress through our roadmap of change.



We can only achieve our ambitious goals with the commitment and passion of our brilliant team.

Five years ago, we could not have imagined the progress made so far, but it is through their diligence and determination that we have made great strides.

With that same motivation, we look forward to meeting the challenges of the years ahead and fulfilling our vision for a sustainable future.

"I'm very fortunate in having such a wonderful space to both grow and then display the plants. Each year we consciously look at ways to increase biodiversity, now we don't just encourage bees and butterflies with pollinators but look at providing viable year round habitats for birds and hedgehogs too."

**~Zac Rafferty, Head Gardener**



"The heatwaves of 2022 only served to reinforce just how precious water is to us all and in particular to my job. The two boreholes saved the season but more importantly are playing a vital role in conserving this natural resource. Providing a safe racing surface will always be a priority here, however there is real potential to expand the boreholes use for "grey water" in the stands and beyond.

**~Adrian Kay, Head Groundsman**



"Just because waste management isn't glamorous does not mean it is not important. Everyone at York gets that and have been really supportive as we earned the "zero to landfill" award. I know there is loads more to do, is it cringe to say that's what is so exciting?"

**~Darren Noyland, Head of Food & Beverage**



"The BMS system was my first major project at York and every month when I get the energy bills it reminds me how vital it is to what we've called Green Knavesmire 300. Getting it installed across such a complex estate was quite an undertaking, training over 30 staff how to get the best from it, quite another."

**~Gavin Pattison, Facilities Manager**

