

The VSCC's Carbon Emissions Initiative – FAQs

At the 2022 AGM the President of the Club, Paul Tunnicliffe, announced that the VSCC Board had approved an innovative collaboration that will see the Club's carbon emissions not just 100% recovered, but almost 400% recovered. This set of Frequently Asked Questions helps explain why and how this is happening, what impact it is hoped to have on the environment, and what the implications are expected to be for the Club's events in the future.

Our cars are cleaner than a brand new electric vehicle fresh out of the car wash! Why are we doing this?

The carbon legacy of pre-war cars is, arguably, minimal. In the context of today's climate change, however, this is beside the point. Unless we play our part in recovering emissions today and support the UK to become net-zero, policy influencers and decision makers might see vintage cars as an all-too easy target. A target supported by a small minority who are not inclined to be vocal. More than this, contributing to the UK achieving net-zero is something the Club should be supporting in any case, simply because it is the right thing to do.

What are we doing?

We have entered into an arrangement with Tree-V, the preferred partner of the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs – of which the VSCC is a member, to recover the CO₂ emissions cars emit while competing.

Why Tree-V?

At the initiative of the Club's President, a VSCC Library staff member with expertise in the area carried out a due diligence exercise in consultation with other experts. Five different carbon emissions offset and capture providers were compared systematically. The package of initiatives Tree-V offered the Club was unrivalled in scope and price. The decision to partner with Tree-V came about through our own VSCC due diligence exercise.

What is the difference between offsetting and capturing emissions?

Offsetting involves purchasing carbon credits. These are calculated through a system developed for the United Nations. Such schemes are mostly based in emerging economies and include, for example, Amazon rainforest regeneration, small hydro-electric power station construction and lean-burning cooking stoves. There does not appear to be a current option for immediate offsetting based in the UK. Carbon credits can be immediately purchased and the emissions are immediately offset. The credits once bought are 'retired'; they cannot be used again.

Capturing emissions involves a longer-term approach to taking CO₂ out of the atmosphere through, e.g. the planting of trees. There are nationally recognized certification schemes for this process. There are, however, many questions regarding the precise measurement of carbon capture; but everyone agrees that planting the right trees in the right places is good for that local habitat's conservation and the ecosystem. The same applies to peatland conservation. This is more expensive than offsetting, not least because the cost of labour is higher and more subject to inflation in the UK than in emerging economies.

What does this mean for the Club?

To have the greatest impact it is best to combine immediate international offsetting with long-term UK carbon capture to recover as much CO₂ as we can. Global warming is an international problem and

offsetting benefits the whole planet. We will also capture carbon long term through UK tree-planting and peatland restoration, so reducing Britain's role in warming the planet and improving our local environment.

Why tree planting and peatland restoration?

Many of the events the Club runs in the UK are held in and around woods and moors. It simply makes sense to support both tree planting and the restoration of peatland in the UK. Long-term capturing carbon through tree-planting in Yorkshire and peatland restoration in the Scottish borders will bring a necessary UK focus. The more trees we have, correctly matched to the local habitat, the more CO₂ is 'breathed' in and taken out of the atmosphere (sequestered). By restoring peatland, we reduce greenhouse gas emissions from a degraded habitat, and also allow the landscape to store more water and support a greater diversity of wildlife.

What are Tree-V offering?

Tree-V will recover almost 4 tonnes of CO₂ for every 1 tonne emitted by our cars competing at VSCC events through internationally-accredited and UK-accredited schemes. This will be achieved by offsetting 2 tonnes and capturing 2 tonnes.

Why 'almost 400%' recovery?

The VSCC calculates that an approximate total of 70 tonnes of CO₂ was emitted across all events in 2021. Since the number of events, types of events and also the number of entries remains relatively stable year-on-year, we anticipate a similar level of emissions for 2022. It is imperative that these are immediately recovered; we should not be adding CO₂ to the atmosphere now we have a way of recovering it.

Further, vintage cars emit particulates and degrade oil and tyres; and are either driven to events or trailered. We must also bear in mind the fact that cars spend time warming up and trundling around the pits, following safety cars for sighting laps, getting lost at rallies and so on. It shouldn't be forgotten either that they've also been driven in some cases for over ninety years, albeit infrequently. We therefore concluded it would be appropriate to immediately offset double the CO₂ emissions of our competing cars.

To contribute to our country achieving net-zero by 2050, we need also to move towards capturing our UK-generated CO₂. So we must go significantly beyond what we are doing through offsetting abroad. The Club chose an amount of capture that, when combined with offsetting, was the largest recovery it could afford this year.

Is this financially sustainable?

Since it proved impossible to implement the scheme in time for the start of the 2022 season, in this first season the cost will be borne by our reserves. This ensures no event suffers a financial disadvantage. The Club will always ensure that recoveries are financially sustainable. A carry forward arrangement will ensure that over the course of any two-year period the emissions of the Club are correctly recovered.

In future years, costs will probably be allocated across events through entry fee price rises specific to event mileages. Alternatively, a single cost might be applied to all entry fees regardless of event type. Note that the additional costs will be very small, amounting at most to a few pounds per event – and in most cases only a few pence.

What about the Woodland Trust?

The Woodland Trust has changed its corporate partnership arrangements. We fall far, far short of their minimum annual emission tonnage requirements. Under the new scheme, the £1 per event entry that went to the Woodland Trust will now be subsumed within the additional event entry costs. This means the actual event entry fee rises are in most cases a few pence only.

When does the Emissions Recovery Scheme start?

The first event to be covered by the new scheme was the Welsh Weekend Tour, 26-27th March.

I do not compete in events. What does this mean for me?

The Club investigated the possibility of offsetting a year's average on-road mileage for one vintage car per driving member. However, it proved unsustainable for the Club to meet the cost of this. In reality, non-event driving is the responsibility of individual members. We therefore urge members to please consider recovering the on-road emissions of their own cars, vintage especially but also modern. We endorse <https://trees.fbhvc.co.uk/>. On the basis of the due diligence exercise, they uniquely meet the Club's needs. However, there are other organisations such as <https://clear.eco/> – who offset emissions for the English Football Association; their input into the research carried out by the Club was invaluable.

What else is the VSCC doing to combat global warming?

The due diligence exercise derived over twenty recommendations, some longer term and strategic in nature, others more immediate. One such, the recovery of the Club's business miles in modern cars has already been implemented: Tree-V is 100% UK-capturing 10,000 business miles. This more than covers the annual mileage accrued by staff in (e.g.) route planning, visiting event venues, attending supplier meetings and so on. In short, the Club will work to eliminate the emissions it can while at the same time recovering all otherwise unavoidable emissions.

Why has the VSCC waited until now to act?

It is only recently that the Club has had a member with both the necessary expertise and the significant amount of time available to volunteer to the task – with the support of others. We could not have done it any sooner without hiring external specialist consultants – at prohibitive cost. We have started as soon as we can.

Global warming is a serious problem, so why does the VSCC not simply stop running all events?

The VSCC and its individual members can make a genuine contribution to the UK achieving net zero by 2050. Our events have great social and psychological benefits. They also contribute to a substantial vintage car industry. Events also support local communities by using local hotels, pubs, restaurants etc – which enhances local employment. More broadly, very many members actively support their local communities and charities with their cars. By recovering around 4 times as much CO₂ as they create, running our events and driving our vintage cars can make a positive difference.

In short, we urge you to give your 400% support to the Club's Carbon Emissions Initiative!