

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 project was for an initial three-year period (2022-4) and the VSCC Board approved its continuation for a further three years in February 2025, through to 2027. 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 arrangements with: 1) Tree-V, the preferred partner of the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs – of which the VSCC is a member; and 2) Net-Hero, the preferred partner of the Historic and Classic Vehicle Alliance, to recover the CO₂ emissions from cars while competing. In addition, we also recover business mileages, commuter mileages and contribute to spectator travel emissions mitigation (see also below), and we are supporting the use of synthetic fuel in our events.

Why Tree-V and Net-Hero?

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, and continue to offer, the Club for UK capture remains unrivalled in scope and price. Net-Hero are the organisation that offsets all the emissions from the Hero-Era international classic car rallies and their expertise in identifying offset projects tailored to the vintage and classic car industry that are effective both in terms of cost and environmental restoration is exceptional. The decision to partner with Tree-V and Net-Hero came about through our own VSCC due diligence exercise and subsequent continued research. Furthermore, Net-Hero undertake the annual baseline carbon footprint analysis of the VSCC, in terms of its day-to-day administrative operations, e.g. the light and heat emissions from the running of the Headquarters.

What is the difference between offsetting and capturing emissions?

Offsetting has become a catch-all word for any type of bought intervention to deal with carbon emissions, be this natural environment or human built environment. As such, it has grown to become a word associated with 'greenwashing'. That is, purchasing the ability to carry on with business as usual by simply 'offsetting' one's emissions on a 1:1 basis. Such action is cynical if not immoral, and we are concerned with actually reducing the carbon emissions of the Club – of which our carbon recovery programme is only one part (see below).

Technically speaking, 'offsetting' involves purchasing carbon credits earned by projects that have already saved carbon. These credits 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 long-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 forest environment restoration, 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. In regards to international offsetting, focusing on projects that enhance the environmental biodiversity of South American Forests ensures our sustainability programme is entirely nature-based; these forests are understood to be 'the lungs of the world'.

To come back to a technical point, we are therefore engaged in what is known as Biological Carbon Sequestration since both the international offsetting and the UK capture projects are all about taking carbon out of the atmosphere and putting it back into natural environments. The international projects purchase this *ex post facto*, i.e. after the work has been done, the UK ones on the other hand purchase it *ante factum*, i.e. before the work has been done.

What are Tree-V and Net-Hero offering?

In total Tree-V and Net-Hero 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 with Net-Hero and capturing 2 tonnes with Tree-V.

Why 'almost 400%' recovery?

To speak in a technical way once more, we are engaged in what we term 'carbon recovery'. Not simply the cynical 1:1 greenwashing, but a genuine attempt to make a thoroughgoing difference. The VSCC

calculates that an approximate total of 70 tonnes of CO₂ was emitted across all events in 2021 and (with the slight exception of the 90th Anniversary year of 2024, when more events were put on) this total has remained largely unchanged to-date. 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 each year. 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 trailed. 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 in the first year of the scheme and this has remained the case.

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 was 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.

For the three years to 2025-2027, costs are embedded within the event entry fees according to specific event mileages. The additional costs will be very small, amounting at most to a few pounds per event – and in most cases only a few pence. In addition, one pound of each spectator entry fee is spent with Tree-V in additional tree planting and peatland restoration, to contribute to the mitigation of spectator mileages travelled to and from the events. Business and commuter mileages are also recovered within the operational overhead capability of the Club (see also below).

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 did the Emissions Recovery Scheme start?

The first event to be covered by the scheme was the Welsh Weekend Tour, 26-27th March 2022.

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. As FBHVC members, we endorse <https://trees.fbhvc.co.uk/> and can also recommend <https://www.net-hero.org/>. 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.

Further, the choice of the new Club Headquarters' location at Hockley Heath was made with the explicit purpose of reducing commuting mileages and thus emissions associated with the day-to-day operation of the Club; the selection of new-build offices also ensured the best available building environmental footprint. In addition, in 2024 the Club changed paper suppliers to ensure all paper used by the Club was certified sustainable. It changed the physical dimensions of the Bulletin, thereby being able to source the paper from within Europe, to reduce the carbon footprint associated with its manufacture. For the 2025 season the Club has also implemented web-based paperless event management to further reduce its use of paper, and has entered into agreements with various synthetic fuel providers such as <https://www.fu3l.co/> and <https://coryton.com/> to ensure these types of fuel are available to members for use at events wherever possible.

The Club has developed a set of carbon calculators that allows members to estimate both the CO₂ emitted from the use of their cars on the road according to mileages and fuel consumption, and the carbon embedded in their cars at the time of their manufacture. This latter calculator, that lists over 70 pre-war cars, supports the Club in offering to members and others an Embedded Carbon Recovery Certificate. This 'Green Form' certifies that carbon embedded in the car at the time of its manufacture has been recovered. Three different recovery ratios are offered. All this work has been done with the support of the Schumacher Institute (<https://schumacherinstitute.org.uk/>), one of the country's leading climate change policy think tanks; the Green Forms are officially endorsed by the Institute.

Why has the VSCC waited until now to act?

It was only in 2021 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 started as soon as we could.

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!