Birmingham 2022's ambition to create a carbon neutral legacy – Credibility Checker

BIRMINGHAM 2022 commonwealth games

Purpose of credibility checker: This credibility checker provides a summary of progress against each of the key elements of Birmingham 2022s carbon management strategy. Quantis, who are acting as Birmingham 2022s third party verification partner, have created this summary credibility checker following an in-depth review of Birmingham 2022 key documentation. This acts as an external summary of a full report.

Statement from Quantis: As an independent third-party, Quantis has thoroughly reviewed and verified all relevant documentation concerning the Carbon Neutral Legacy objectives of the Games. This includes the Carbon Management Plan, the GHG accounting methodology, the reference footprints as well as the Carbon Offsetting Strategy. After this review, Quantis validates the overall approach of Birmingham 2022. A more detailed reviewed and credibility check is available in the table below. Quantis is not liable for the actual implementation of the Carbon Management strategy and the long-term achievements of B2022's climate goals.

Date of last update: 22/06/22 This checker will continue to be updated.

Key:
- ✅ Implemented/validated
- 👍 In progress and on track
- ⚠️ In progress but to be reinforced
- 🚩 Off track

Programme Element	Current Credibility Status	Status Comment	Ongoing Action
Carbon Management Plan	✅	**Carbon management plan:** Overall, the Organising Committee's (OC) carbon management plan follows the big principles and criteria of a credible climate strategy. The carbon management plan includes all relevant and necessary information and approach described is in line with best practice. The OC's carbon management plan is to be published on the website.	
	✅	**Reduce first strategy:** As best practice, the OC is taking and encouraging a reduction-first approach in delivery of the Games. The following approach to emissions management is correctly implemented: 1. Eliminate 2. Reduce 3. Substitute 4. Offset	In build up to the Games, and as part of the post-Games report, share reduction stories or actions that have been implemented will in more detail with the associated proof points and substantiation.
	👍	**Carbon Neutral Legacy:** The updated phrasing of the long-term objectives of the Games regarding leaving a carbon neutral legacy instead of being "carbon neutral" is strong and robust. The use of the term "legacy" showcases that the emissions of the Games will be offset and compensated in the long term and that the event will not be carbon neutral as soon as it ends. Wording on the Pledge has been updated to offer better clarity and a note on why the document has been updated has been added to the Pledge and an updated version of the Pledge added to the B2022 website.	Ensure language used to communicate approach continues to refer to carbon neutral legacy and describe approach. Share guidance with partners on how to accurately communicate approach. Pledge updated to offer better clarity with a note explaining update in language used.
GHG Accounting Methodology and scope	✅	**Overall methodology:** the OC has aligned to established methodology set out by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Carbon Footprint Methodology and the best practice accountancy standard of the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol. Quantis recommends largely the use of these two methodological standards as they are recognised as "best-practice" worldwide in the different sectors.	Continue to align to this methodology for the final carbon footprint
	✅	**Scope and boundaries definition:** The OC has developed a decision tree to decide if emissions are allocated to the Games' OC, its stakeholders, its activities or if these emissions are unrelated to the Games. The decision tree is built on the IOC guidance. Quantis validates this approach as it ensures transparency, coherence and is built on best-practice.	To ensure transparency of approach and decision tree, these are included within carbon management plan.
	✅	**Actual scope and boundaries:** Within the review of the first and second reference footprint, Quantis can say with confidence that the boundaries of the carbon footprint have been determined using the decision tree and that no material emissions have been left out of scope. The rationale for non-included categories is clearly presented and transparent. The decision process is clear and transparent and is thoroughly followed by the OC.	
	⚠️	**Permanent infrastructure:** According to the decision tree, key infrastructure projects have been left, in part, out of the scope of the reference footprints. A separate document explaining the rationale for the exclusion of these major project has been developed by the OC and this is also communicated in the carbon management plan, and on the website. Following greater data availability and recommendations from Quantis, the OC will include an apportioned amount of the embodied carbon of these infrastructures in the final footprint. All temporary infrastructure and overlay are within scope and included in the footprint.	On the availability of data, a proportion of embodied carbon for the capital projects of Sandwell Aquatics Centre and Alexander Stadium will be included within the final carbon footprint, based on relevance to the Games.
Initial Baseline Footprint	✅	**First reference footprint:** Crucial first step of the process, it gave a first estimate of the total footprint of the Games and has been used as a basis for the development of the Carbon Neutral Legacy strategy and offsetting scheme. More importantly, it is crucial to use this first reference footprint as a learning step for better data capture and collection and, most importantly, to focus the data collection efforts to material sources of emissions.	
Second Reference Footprint	✅	**Second reference footprint:** Quantis has verified and validated this second reference carbon footprint. Even though some points of improvements are highlighted (primarily related to data quality that will come with actual data and refining assumptions within the spectator travel model), we strongly believe that this second reference footprint can be used with confidence to build and refine the Carbon Management Plan and the Carbon Neutral Legacy strategy of the Games.	
	👍	**Scope and boundaries:** As mentioned in the 'scopes and boundary definition' criteria above, Quantis validates this approach as it ensures transparency, coherence and is built on best-practice. Quantis recommends that categories of business travel, employee commuting and media travel should be implemented in the post-event assessment of the event.	Home working was accounted for within the second reference footprint. However, due to covid-19, business travel and employee commuting was minimal, therefore limited data at the time of the 2nd reference footprint. These categories will be fully added at the final footprint.
	✅	**Emission factors:** The emission factors selected cover all GHG emissions and not only CO_2. This is a crucial point as some other gasses might be important contributors.	
	✅	**Data quality and buffer:** The OC has accounted for a buffer of 30% for the footprint results in its Carbon Neutral Legacy strategy. Based on the high variability of some of the pre-event data and its availability only after the event for some of the categories this buffer has been kept as part of the second reference footprint. A clear plan has also been highlighted to improve the data confidence between the first, second and final footprints. This data improvement strategy covers all material categories and highlights the potential of improvement for each of them. This strategy should allow to move from a relatively low confidence in the initial baseline footprint to mostly medium to high data quality in the final footprint.	Ensure data improvements across categories, in line with data improvement strategy, to improve accuracy and quality of the final footprint. Specific attention to be paid to travels, waste and energy categories.
Carbon Reduction Initiatives	✅	**Carbon materiality matrix:** The approach taken by the OC to prioritise emission hotspots using their materiality matrix is supported by Quantis. The matrix is based on the following key criteria: expected carbon impact, level of OC influence on delivery, level of stakeholder interest. It was noted, one valuation another parameter "Awareness-raising potential" could also have been included in the prioritisation of actions.	
	✅	**Carbon reduction stories:** Quantis has reviewed the various carbon reduction stories implemented by the Games and validates the approach. Due to the timeframe and the proximity to the Games, no new actions have been suggested. Furthermore, all material categories of the footprint are mainly covered by the existing reduction actions. The use of a tracker and "owners" of the reduction stories has also been implemented by the OC according to best-practice.	In the weeks leading up to the Games and post-Games, the reduction stories that have been implemented will be substantiated with either quantitative reduction potential or any tangible information.
Carbon Offsetting Strategy (Commonwealth Forest)	✅	**Overall approach:** Once again the "reduce first, compensate later" strategy that is recommended as best practice has been implemented for its event. Quantis validates this approach from the OC and supports the use of carbon compensation projects to offset the unavoidable emissions, given these offsetting projects follow all required criteria.	
	👍	**Commonwealth Forest:** The development of an internal and local project of natural carbon removal project through the planting of trees and the storage of carbon in biomass has been chosen. This approach, favoured by Quantis, allows the OC to be much less reliant on the use of carbon credits from the Voluntary Carbon Credits market, which usually lack of transparency, permanency and sometimes lack additionality. Quantis encourages companies to work directly with project developers (instead of intermediaries) to design projects that are meaningful for the environment globally and locally, in line with their operations, and guaranteeing highest quality.	
	✅	**Carbon capture potential:** The UK Woodland Carbon Code has been used to estimate the amount of forest needed to offset the residual emissions of the Games. The UK Woodland Carbon Code is internationally recognised for high standards of sustainable forest management and carbon management and is endorsed by ICROA (The International Carbon Reduction and Offset Alliance), the global umbrella body for carbon reduction and offset providers in the voluntary market.	
	⚠️	**Long-term governance:** Because of its nature as a one-time event and the OC dissolving at the end of the year, the Carbon Neutral Legacy governance is absolutely critical to ensure that projects are carried out properly over the next decades and survives the dissolution of the OC. The forest process already has robust governance in accordance with the UK Woodland Code. To ensure robust legacy governance the OC recognises the need for an independent overseer. Quantis also recommends there is a role for an independent overseer who will review on an annual basis the progress of the project by asking Severn Trent for a written status report and validate the report.	The OC will continue to work on formalising the independent overseer and agreeing the relevant terms.
	👍	**Key criteria:** Different institutions have developed a set of criteria to ensure the quality of a carbon credit. Quality in this sense refers to the confidence that a project/method/standard delivers a carbon credit: the real avoidance of a GHG emission or the permanent removal of CO_2 from the atmosphere. To ensure the highest credibility for the offsetting strategy and the Commonwealth Forest, Quantis recommends that at key criteria are met and implemented. Key criteria includes permanence, additionality, avoidance of overestimations, exclusive claim to GHG reductions to ensure uniqueness, avoidance of social and environmental harm and creation of co-benefits, net zero alignment and alignment of values to Birmingham 2022/OC values. A table in the carbon management plan details how the Commonwealth Forest, supported by the Games' Official Nature and Carbon-Neutral partner Severn Trent, will align to best practice criteria and will work to mitigate any potential risk areas.	
	👍	**Credit retirement:** For the retirement of the credits, after assessing different options, Quantis agrees that Severn Trent retiring the credits on behalf of the OC/Games final footprint is the best solution moving forward.	Severn Trent will retire credits on behalf of the OC as they are validated
	👍	**Permanence:** Permanent nature of carbon credits is stipulated by UK Woodland Code and reiterated by Severn Trent landowners' agreements, stipulating that all forestry planted need to remain permanently. Severn Trent landowner agreement commit Severn Trent to 35-year maintenance, after which this becomes landowners' responsibility. Due to the short-term life of the OC and to truly ensure the permanency of the offsets, Quantis recommends to also appoint a third-party that will act as an oversight of the Carbon Neutral Legacy of the Games and ensure Severn Trent are held accountable for the completion of the project.	Third-party overseer to be formalised as per "long-term governance" criteria.
	👍	**Additionality:** In the case of the Games, The forest is born solely out of the Games and the relationship between Severn Trent and the OC. Furthermore, as a new project, the additionality of the carbon credits will be ensured. It is important however to verify and control that the credits are not used for another purpose (criteria of uniqueness). Through the verification with the UK Woodland Carbon Code, numerous additionality tests will need to be passed on a regular basis (cycles of 5 to 10 years).	
	👍	**Real, no leakage:** Severn Trent has implemented a verification strategy that will be upheld by the UK Woodland Carbon Code. Each site will undergo the UK Woodland Carbon Code Registration and Validation & Verification stages throughout the lifetime of the woodland. Verification audits will be undertaken at set intervals (every five or 10 years) to ensure the trees are sequestering as much carbon as initially calculated, and to ensure the woodlands are in good healthy condition and are being managed in line with best practice.	
	✅	**Buffer:** A second buffer, covering for forest-related risks is key and recommended. Indeed, it avoids that the amount of carbon credits stored by the Forest are underestimated and therefore does not allow for full compensation of all remaining emissions. This buffer has been accounted for and is implemented in the accounting of the carbon storage potential of the Forest by Severn Trent, following the UK Woodland Carbon Code calculation methodologies and guidelines.	
Website Content	👍	Main website pages on sustainability have been reviewed by Quantis. Specific recommendations have been made to include further clarity in wording and add more detailed information on the FAQ.	Continue to keep website up to date, when necessary, with key information and detail regarding the carbon management approach
Overall approach to creating a carbon neutral legacy	👍	**Overall approach for the Commonwealth Forest:** Quantis validates the approach chosen by the OC for their Carbon Neutral Legacy, given it strictly follows the aforementioned criteria and that a strong long-term governance is implemented to ensure liability and completion of the project over the next 35 years.	Continue to ensure we meet the objectives we have set out in a credible and transparent manner.