**Birmingham 2022 joins forces with Severn Trent to help deliver the first ever carbon-neutral Commonwealth Games.**

* Unveiling of Games’ new sustainability pledge outlines seven distinct pillars covering carbon, accessibility, human rights, and ethical procurement, as well as ambitious environmental commitments
* Severn Trent becomes the Official Nature & Carbon Neutral Supporterto help Birmingham 2022 deliver first carbon-neutral Commonwealth Games
* Legacy of the new partnership will incl­­ude creation of 2022 acres of forest, as well as 72 new urban forests for the West Midlands

**15 March 2021:** With 500 days to go until the start of Birmingham 2022, organisers have unveiled plans to deliver the first ever carbon-neutral Commonwealth Games.

Outlined in its newly published sustainability pledge, Birmingham 2022 has laid clear a series of commitments and the steps it will take with the aim of achieving this milestone, as well as other operational workstreams that will help it become the most sustainable Commonwealth Games to date.

A critical part of this commitment is the forming of a new partnership with Severn Trent. Becoming Birmingham 2022’s Official Nature & Carbon Neutral Supporter, Severn Trent will be responsible for delivering a series of initiatives that help offset the carbon generated by the Commonwealth Games and hopes to leave a positive social and environmental legacy of sustainability in the West Midlands.

Two of the standout initiatives that Severn Trent will be delivering on behalf of Birmingham 2022 include the creation of 2022 acres of forest, as well as 72 tennis-court-sized mini forests, to be built in urban areas across the West Midlands. Each mini forest will be linked to one of the nations and territories competing at the Commonwealth Games in 2022. The 2022 acres of forest, intended to be based in the West Midlands, will feature native species, and will not only help local people reconnect with nature, but will also help offset the carbon generated by the Games.

Improving the natural environment has a positive impact on natural water sources, which is why alongside already pledging to be a net zero carbon organisation by 2030, Severn Trent has committed to planting 1.3 million new trees and enhancing 5,000 hectares of biodiversity as part of its existing Great Big Nature Boost initiative.

**Ian Reid, Chief Executive of Birmingham 2022 said:**

“We have always had strong ambitions to set new standards in all we do with these Commonwealth Games and make significant progress in areas that matter.

“Our plan not only outlines how we will continue to support the regionwide economic recovery, but also demonstrates how we will leave a credible piece of social and environmental legacy.

“Our new partnership with Severn Trent is incredibly important to achieving these ambitions, and it sets a compelling benchmark for how we deliver on all aspects of sustainability over the next 18 months.  Our commitment to become the first carbon-neutral Games is a significant one, and this marks just the start of our journey to make these Commonwealth Games the most sustainable to date”.

**Liv Garfield, CEO of Severn Trent said:**

‘’We’re delighted to be partnering with the Commonwealth Games and to play a leading role in helping make Birmingham 2022 the most sustainable games ever.  We’re passionate about making a positive impact on the communities and the environment where we live and operate, and to the lives of everyone that we serve.

“And that’s why we just had to be involved. Through this exciting partnership we’ll build on our existing work and ambitions to deliver lasting social and environmental change by creating new green urban spaces, further enhancing biodiversity, promoting plastic-free thinking and ultimately delivering a carbon neutral legacy for generations to come.’’

**CGF President, Dame Louise Martin said:**

“Birmingham 2022’s plan to stage the first ever carbon-neutral Commonwealth Games is an historic moment for Commonwealth Sport. It reinforces our commitment to ensure that the Games leaves a positive social and environmental legacy for generations to come.

“The creation of 2022 acres of forest, as well as 72 new urban forests in the West Midlands, is an inspired initiative that will provide numerous benefits for the local community.

“This will set a long-term blueprint for future Commonwealth Games that will make our event a global leader when it comes to staging sustainable, environmentally-sound sporting competition. I would like to give special recognition to our excellent team at CGF Partnerships (CGFP) in securing Birmingham 2022’s Official Nature & Carbon Neutral Supporter. Severn Trent is the perfect partner to help us deliver a carbon neutral legacy and we are delighted to be working with them.”

The plans come just a few months before the UK hosts the COP26 summit in Glasgow, host city for the 2014 Commonwealth Games, which will bring together heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree coordinated action to tackle climate change.

**Nigel Huddleston, Minister for Sport and Tourism said**:

"I'm delighted to support Birmingham 2022's ambition to be the first ever carbon-neutral Commonwealth Games. I hope this will set a new standard for major events as we look to build back greener and play our part in building a more sustainable future for us all.”

**Cllr Ian Ward, Leader of Birmingham City Council, said:**

“As a city that aims to take a leading role in tackling climate change, there is so much in this sustainability pledge and the partnership plans with Severn Trent that complements what we are already doing. We have stated through our own Route To Zero project that we want to get to net zero carbon in the shortest possible time and only this month were reconfirmed as a Tree City of the World. The other social and economic pillars of the sustainability pledge also resonate strongly with everything we are doing at a city level. This pledge, when delivering on its ambitions, will undoubtedly bolster our efforts to improve life in Birmingham.”

**Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands, said:**

“The West Midlands is facing a very serious climate emergency, and in order to reach our #WM2041 goal of carbon neutrality by 2041 there are going to have to be some very radical steps taken.

“Today’s announcement about the Commonwealth Games being the first ever carbon-neutral games is exactly that, and the organisers alongside Severn Trent deserve enormous praise for such a bold and courageous move that sets a precedent right across the globe. We’re looking forward to working with Severn Trent on the really exciting plans to create 2022 acres of forest across the region in places that will benefit people across the West Midlands.”

“The move to carbon-neutrality for the Games should also help create thousands of jobs across the West Midlands, working hand in glove with my plan to get 100,000 people into work in the next two years to help the region recover from the economic damage the Covid-19 pandemic has caused.”

**In addition to the ambition on carbon, and further detailed in its newly published sustainability pledge Birmingham 2022 lays clear the seven key pillars it will work on to become the most sustainable Commonwealth Games to date, including:**

1. **Addressing carbon and air quality**

Birmingham 2022 aims to be the first carbon neutral Commonwealth Games. It has conducted an independent, credible analysis of the Games likely carbon footprint to determine the baseline. The primary goal is to reduce carbon at every possible opportunity and offset what remains through credible initiatives with support from Severn Trent. The Games will also help the region to change the way it thinks about sustainable travel as it actively encourages the use of public transport and active travel to reduce congestion. This will help directly improve air quality, as well as overall health and wellbeing. Birmingham 2022 is working with experts on maximising the use of cleaner generators, supplying a modern and cleaner bus fleet, and aspiring to develop a car fleet containing hybrid and electric vehicles. In addition, the three-site campus village model which will see some athletes staying close to their training and competition sites will support us to reduce travel and carbon emissions.

1. **Promoting a circular economy (reducing and encouraging waste reduction)**

Birmingham 2022 will work with subcontractors to reduce waste across the full Games footprint. It will also install free drinking-water refill points wherever possible to encourage people to use refillable water bottles. Additionally, wherever possible the Games will hire rather than buy equipment, and where it does buy equipment it will repurpose, reuse, and redistribute as many assets as possible at the end of the Games

1. **Delivering new conservation initiatives**

The contractors working on the new Sandwell Aquatics Centre and Alexander Stadium developments, are being actively encouraged to increase the levels of biodiversity and bring improvements to the local environment. Furthermore, the Games partners will clean and clear 22 miles of canals through the ‘United by 2022’ partnership that exists with The Canals & Rivers Trust.  Conservation and sustainability will become core themes as part of the Games’ regional and international education programmes, and it will continue to work with expert organisations such as the National Trust, Environment Agency, and Carbon Trust, to make sure all activities are credible and measurable.

1. **Setting new standards in accessibility**

The Games will offer the largest fully integrating para-sports programme in history. This means accessibility has been firmly embedded from the outset in early planning for the Games and its existence. Offering access to sport for all means providing accessible venues, facilities, and barrier-free environments so that these once in a lifetime Games can be enjoyed by everyone and it is possible to do that independently. Birmingham 2022 has an ambition to reduce the disability employment gap. As a Disability Confident Employer the Games continues to review its processes to remove barriers for paid roles and volunteering opportunities to make them accessible to all.  Birmingham 2022 is also working to deliver the best accessibility standards across the Games, going beyond best practice for other major multi-sport events.

1. **Embedding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in all aspects of Games delivery**

The Games will be an event that is inclusive to all, regardless of gender, age, race, sexuality, ethnicity, or socio-economic background. We will actively seek to recruit a diverse workforce and build an inclusive environment for our employees as well as thousands of volunteers that are representative of the region and we will be transparent about workforce demographics; it will host the first Commonwealth Games with more female medal events than male medal events, and the largest ever integrated para sport programme; and provide an accessible ticketing policy to maximise participation across the local community.

1. **Promoting social value through all practices**

The Games will provide jobs to try and help reduce unemployment and serve to upskill the workforce of the West Midlands. It will create around 40,000 new jobs and skills opportunities through its wider supply chain including over 12,500 volunteering roles. This will aid regional recovery from the economic impact of the pandemic, as well as helping to reduce poverty and exclusion. By measuring social value, we will contribute to how other publicly funded events and organisations could evidence social value and added benefits.

1. **Ensure human rights are at the heart of the Games**

The Games will align with all Human Rights law and UN best-practices, embedding human rights training at every level of the Games team’s structure to incorporate ethical trading, safeguarding, and freedom of speech. Furthermore, the Games will require all contractors and suppliers to demonstrate robust anti-slavery and anti-human trafficking measures.

For more information on the Birmingham 2022 sustainability pledge, please visit [www.birmingham2022.com/sustainability](http://www.birmingham2022.com/sustainability)

The Birmingham 2022 sustainability pledge is intrinsically aligned to the Commonwealth Games Federations’ impact areas of peace, sustainability and prosperity as well as the United Nation’s (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals are clear and compelling, and task us all to work together to drive positive environmental, social, and economic outcomes by 2030.

**ENDS**

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**About the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games**

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, which will be held from 28 July until 8 August 2022, will be a once in a lifetime opportunity to put the city, the region, and its people on the global stage.

The Games is already proving to be a catalyst for transformation across the West Midlands, attracting new investment and funding, creating jobs and apprenticeships for local people and new opportunities for local businesses, as well as accelerating projects that will ensure the region is ready to host a fantastic sports and cultural celebration.

Birmingham 2022 will be the Games for everyone, bringing people together from across Birmingham and the region, to provide a warm welcome to millions of visitors during the summer of 2022.

Find out more at [www.birmingham2022.com](http://www.birmingham2022.com)

**About Severn Trent**

Severn Trent is one of Britain’s largest water companies, serving 4.5 million homes and business customers in and around the Midlands. Its region stretches from the Welsh borders to Rutland and from the outskirts of Sheffield south to the Bristol Channel and east to the Humber. The company delivers almost two billion litres of fresh, clean drinking water every day through 46,000km of pipes. And when its finished with, it is taken away again to be cleaned and treated before being returned safely to the environment.

Severn Trent’s partnership with the Commonwealth Games will help to accelerate its ambitious plans as it plays a part in creating new green urban spaces, further enhancing biodiversity, promoting plastic-free thinking and ultimately delivering a carbon neutral legacy for generations to come.

Find out more at [www.wonderfulontap.co.uk](http://www.wonderfulontap.co.uk)

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