

EarthRuns by Moray Carey

Participation in selected “virtual” races has fortunately enabled charities to recoup a proportion of expected income (such as the London Marathon “2.6 Challenge”, the YMCA Fun Runs) and benefitted good causes (such as SASH through the “East Surrey NHS Get Active Challenge” organised by Run Reigate).

Which virtual races to enter are a matter of personal choice since there are so many organisations worthy of support.

One such, in my opinion, is **EarthRuns**. Their website declares:

“Our climate is in crisis, planting more trees and fighting deforestation is one part of the solution. Running a virtual race to create an actual solution. **You run the miles and we partner with organisations worldwide to plant the trees.** It’s simple, it’s easy, it’s fun.”

Each runner selects a race, which can be run anywhere before the cut-off date, then chooses a distance (either single or cumulative) which determines the number of trees to be planted.

For example, 5k run will result in two trees being planted 10k - three, 75 miles - twelve etc. You simply upload evidence from your mileage recording device (such as Garmin) that the pre-selected distance has been completed.

Subsequently, according to EarthRuns:

“For every race run we keep a total of the number of trees earned. At the end of each race deadline we pool the money raised and send it to our partners to plant the trees. Planting typically happens in the rainy season when the soil is wet to provide optimal conditions.

“Currently our partners are working within an 80–90% survival rate of all trees planted. We are provided with evidence of which tree species are planted, expected survival rates, community engagement and ecological benefits which we share in our newsletter if you wish to [sign up](#).”

Further “each tree will grow to support over 392 species and create enough oxygen to support two human beings!”

Sample entry fees are £6 (5k/10k), £12 for marathon distance. A medal can be purchased as an optional extra @ £3.50.

In accordance with their environmental credentials Earthworks say their medals are:

- handmade from recycled paper and card
- contain embedded seeds which can be planted to produce wildflowers
- the ribbon is made from plastic-free, biodegradable cotton

Currently, all the planting is done overseas “often as part of reforestation projects after major wildfires or to repair damage caused by industry and resource extraction” I emailed EarthRuns to enquire about the possibility of planting in the UK and received the following reply:

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“We’re definitely hoping to plant more trees in the UK, it’s something that’s important to us. Our main problem is the cost - it’s so much more expensive to plant trees here and trying to balance the cost of a race to the cost of planting is always a factor. However, we keep a regular eye out for any opportunities that may come up. One of our charities last year did a planting in Scotland and as we grow we hope that we can also find and influence some more partners in the UK to make it more affordable. “

Further information may be found on their website <https://www.earthruns.com/>