



# GIVING BACK

Annual Report

2019/2020



Stephens Scown launched its Giving Back Programme in September 2018. This is our second annual report setting out our impact in the period September 2019 to August 2020. This has been a tricky year given the Covid pandemic, but we have sought to continue our work in this area and found some new ways to give back.



Our Commitment (as confirmed in our Giving Back Policy) is:

- *Stephens Scown genuinely cares about our people, local community and the environment*
- *We seek to take business decisions and corporately act in a way that is consistent with this care and long term view*
- *We support our colleagues to follow their own passions for community and environment, to enrich their lives and increase the positive impact we can have*
- *We dedicate a significant proportion of our resources and energy to what we feel passionate about*
- *We wish to be an organisation that actively demonstrates this care, with a long term vision of becoming a leader in this field*

The Giving Back Programme is split into four pillars:

- *Environmental*
- *Pro Bono*
- *Volunteering*
- *Charity*



# ENVIRONMENT

We are on a journey towards Zero Carbon – seeking to lower our carbon footprint. One of our core values includes seeking to be sustainable and to do things efficiently and without waste. We want to leave behind a world that the next generation can enjoy.

## This year we have:

Increased accuracy in our carbon tracking through the introduction of a clearer more comprehensive expenses system.

Moved to only using locally supplied catering wherever possible.

Installation of electrical vehicle charging points at three of our sites (Osprey House, High Water House and Curzon House).

Attended LSA conferences in London and Exeter to promote Stephens Scown's successes and learn new ways to improve.

All legal teams (apart from those that do Legal Aid work) have now passed their PaperLite audit and are no longer maintaining paper files – reducing the amount of paper we print.

Submitted Government ESOS (energy assessment scheme) to show that we have considered our carbon emissions and ways to reduce them.

Provided plant alternatives to milk throughout the offices.

Colleague campaign around ethical green Christmas: with personal articles from three of the Giving Back team on the themes of gifts, wrapping and a sustainable Christmas dinner.

Changed the biscuits we provide at client meetings to those which have less impact on the environment due to their ingredients and packaging.



## In detail:

1

### Carbon Footprint and Cleaner Energy

Following on from our carbon audit last year we have improved our carbon tracker to produce more accurate results and better analysis. This will not only help us provide evidence for the success of any new initiatives but also allow us to focus on areas that can be improved. This year we reduced our carbon footprint by 54.75%. The introduction of a new expenses system has been fundamental in this improvement as we have been able to accurately record our emissions caused by staff travel and look closely at whether this travel is necessary or not.

We renewed our Clean Energy Tariff for all offices (except Exeter). This matches 100% of our estimated annual electricity use with UK-sourced Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin (REGO) Certificates. This ensures that an equal amount of the electricity we use is added to the energy grid from renewable sources, supporting renewable energy in the UK and projects across the world to help towards reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We are looking to purchase 100% of electric consumption from renewable sources next year.

The introduction of [EV charge points in our Exeter and Truro offices](#) has encouraged many staff to purchase EV vehicles. The charging points are also a physical reminder to our clients and staff of our commitment to being a greener firm.

In November we also reviewed the LED lighting in Osprey House and High Water House in Truro.

The greatest change around carbon has been brought by COVID-19. Whilst the pandemic has had disastrous effects on our way of life, it has allowed our carbon footprint to be greatly reduced. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from business travel reduced 96.6% from lockdown and through Q1. This has also allowed a conversation to happen throughout the firm regarding the ability to work from both home and the office, and to use technology rather than travel. It is hoped that this will have a positive impact not only on our workforces' work-life balance, that will reduce emissions from travelling to work and external meetings, but also in the way that we work, which will cut the amount of energy and resources consumed by the offices.

2

### Resources and Recycling

All our legal teams (except those dealing with Legal Aid) are now operating under our PaperLite scheme, which requires electronic filing rather than paper filing. This alongside homeworking has dramatically reduced our paper consumption by around 2/3rds.

We have continued our relationship with our stationery supplier Commercial, who pride themselves on scouring the supply chain to find reliable organisations offering the most sustainable office products. They also run their own assessments to gauge suppliers' credentials and proactively support the continual improvement of their approaches to ethical trading and sustainability. Their online ordering system makes it easy to compare the green credentials of different products and proactively suggests more environmentally friendly alternatives. 88% of our stationery is eco-friendly and we use 'green' or recycled products wherever possible.

None of our waste goes to landfill and all offices recycle. Even our confidential shredding is recycled – this year we saved 541 trees through this programme.

We have also been collecting writing instruments in Cornwall to recycle. These can be any brand of pen, felt tip, highlighter, marker, correction fluid/tape, mechanical pencil and eraser pen regardless of composition. Some teams have also been collecting contact lens packaging, oral care products and egg boxes. All offices have been collecting and recycling crisp packets.

Cornish Tea and Coffee now take back our decaf tea tubs from our Truro office when they are empty in order to re-use them. The caterers in Truro also do the same with sandwich and salad trays.

### Benchmarking

We continue to be members of [Legal Sustainability Alliance](#). Having attended LSA conferences and carbon neutral workshops it seems we are ahead of many of their contemporaries both ideologically and practically when considering our impact on the environment.

We also continue to explore becoming a B Corp (B Corporation business), having scored sufficiently highly to become accredited and join this important global movement. This is being considered by the board at a strategic level before being taken to the partnership.

3

# PRO BONO

Pro Bono work is professional work undertaken voluntarily and without payment or at a reduced fee as a public service. The firm undertakes Legal Aid work for individuals at greatly reduced rates and has a history of undertaking wider pro bono work.

Teams are encouraged to undertake pro bono work for specific charities or community interest companies. This can be applied to all the work undertaken for the project (so it is free), or as a part pro bono (where it reduces the fees).

Our goal this year was to complete at least five pro bono projects. We have exceeded this. Some examples of our activity in this area:



1

### Mylor Sailability

Mylor Sailability is an award-winning charity that aims to make sailing and powerboating accessible to all. It provides sailing and powerboat sessions for people with disabilities in the Fal Estuary, Mylor, near Falmouth and was founded by Tracey Boyne the owner of Mylor Sailing School in 2014. Verity Slater and Carrienne Matta, members of our Marine team that specialise in HR and employment law, supported the charity in January by reviewing and advising on their contracts of employment on a pro bono basis. It was important not only that the contracts were legally right but that the sailing school and Sailability staff and charity were well supported, so they could continue the great work of getting everyone out on the water, to enjoy the wind, waves and beauty of sailing in Cornwall. Verity said that as a passionate sailor from the area, she really could relate to the fantastic work Mylor Sailability were doing.

2

### Free 30 minutes legal advice on pandemic

As the Covid-19 pandemic started to have a more dramatic impact in the UK, many smaller employers and charities needed urgent practical advice on key legal issues around employment law, IP and tech and contract issues. Various teams within the firm stepped up to offer free 30-minute advice sessions to businesses and charities to help them through this unprecedented time. The employment team alone did 85 of these free advice sessions in the period 17 March to 3 June 20, equating to 42.5 hours.

3

### Cornwall School for Social Entrepreneurs

The Cornwall School for Lloyds Bank Social Entrepreneurs Trade Up programme is designed to help social entrepreneurs improve their business acumen, and increase their success in the future. Four colleagues helped present legal content over a number of days on the programme and gave advice to these small social enterprises so that they could in turn increase the impact they could have.

Sally Heard, CEO of Cornwall School for Social Entrepreneurs CIC, said:

*“Our students are all committed to taking their business to the next stage of development, and the sessions delivered by Verity and her team were extremely valuable, coming at just the right time for our students. The advice given enabled them to gain a greater understanding of key legal issues of running a business and embedding this knowledge at an early stage; the sessions were packed full of invaluable information, delivered in an interactive and accessible way. SSE values the good relationship it has with businesses across Cornwall and this is a perfect example of how we collaborate to share experience and expertise to support our students in the knowledge of the significant impact they have on the social, environmental and economic impact within our communities across the whole of Cornwall and beyond.”*

4

### Help Together

Help Together was a community project to support the Cornish community during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic. An online noticeboard for people in need all across Cornwall was set up. People who were in need of support could post a request to the online board and the community could respond by offering help. The types of support that could be provided through the noticeboard ranged from trips to the supermarket or pharmacy, taking care of pets or spending time simply talking to lonely people in isolation

Kathryn Heath from the IP/IT and Data Protection team contributed to the project by providing legal advice and support to the team setting up the online noticeboard and was delighted to help this initiative for the benefit of the Cornish community.

5

### Kin

Olivia Miller, a solicitor in our Charities team, is providing governance support to Kin, an exciting new charity offering mentoring, leadership and educational training for community grassroots organisations and individuals working to create positive social and environmental change in their town or city. The charity is looking to deliver projects in Bristol, London and Truro and will be focusing on offering support to strengthen and educate community leaders so that they are able to initiate change effectively. This work is particularly timely in the context of the re-examination of the meaning of ‘community’ over recent months and the potential opportunities that this presents to maximise the social and environmental impact of local led projects.

6

### Action to Prevent Suicide

Laurie Trounce, our Charity sector head, continues to work with Action to Prevent Suicide. She has assisted with the setting up of an innovative new charity, Goodwill in Action To Prevent Suicide. Its vision is to create a respite centre in a rural setting which will offer non-medical support to those affected or bereaved by suicide. The latest government data shows that the South West had the second highest suicide rate among men in England which emphasises the importance of this work in our region.

7

### Marketing for Young Farmers Clubs

Cornwall – over the last few years we have been supporting Cornwall Young Farmers’ Clubs with their marketing activity including designing their print newsletter for them which allows them to present themselves professionally to the rural marketplace. This continued this year, including their winter 2019 edition.

Devon – Tom Chartres-Moore, a Senior Associate in our IP/IT team, presented to approximately 30 members at their training weekend in November 2019 on the importance of cyber security. The marketing team also supported the Devon Young Farmers by providing communications support following the launch of their #WeGrow campaign. This campaign was funded by NFU Mutual who signed a three-year sponsorship with the club.

8

### Discounted work for NHS staff

To support NHS key workers who are on the front line in the fight against coronavirus, we also offered NHS workers in Cornwall and Devon a significant discount on private client services.



# CHARITY

The firm's current charities are **Surfers Against Sewage (firm-wide), Exeter Foodbank (Devon) and Invictus Trust (Cornwall).**

**Surfers Against Sewage is a grassroots movement tackling plastic pollution and protecting the UK's coastlines for all to enjoy safely and sustainably.**

**Exeter Foodbank has been helping local people in crisis since 2008.**

**Invictus Trust is a small charity which aims to support and offer services to local teenagers who are suffering from poor mental health and associated issues.**

Since August 2019 staff have raised over £3000 for the three charities. This has been raised using a number of different fundraising initiatives.

## Exeter Foodbank Donations

1

Donation baskets have been set up in our Exeter office for colleagues to donate items for Exeter Foodbank. The foodbank has a monthly priority list which is circulated to all staff so they could add items to their weekly shop that the foodbank urgently needed. Given that Christmas is a particularly difficult time for those who are in need we ran a specific campaign called "The 12 teams of Christmas" which saw us donate over 300kg of food across 12 days in December. Colleagues also volunteered to help at the foodbank to distribute food parcels and make hot drinks during one of the foodbank's busiest periods.

## The SAS County Games

2

Taking advantage of our staff's competitive edge and friendly rivalry between our Devon and Cornwall colleagues, we devised an SAS (Surfers Against Sewage) County Games to raise funds for our firm charity. The games were conducted over three weeks and consisted of:

- *Scown Tasker (a play on the hit TV show Taskmaster) where individuals had to compete in random challenges in order to win points from our judge Mike Northcott.*
- *The Partners' Quiz where Managing Partner Richard Baker acted as quizmaster in a game that saw partners from each county face-off to answer questions based on some of the work Surfers Against Sewage do.*
- *A cycle-athon which saw fierce competition to peddle the furthest in 15 minutes – which caused a lot of controversy between the counties.*

## Holiday Fundraisers

3

These have included a Scary Bake off (Halloween), Christmas Raffle, Christmas Jumper Day, Christmas Bake-off, Blue Monday Treats and Valentine's Day Bake off and Row-mance Charity Tournament (a row-athon) and St Patrick's Day "Guess the Gold". As well as providing an opportunity to raise funds it is also a great way for the keen bakers among us to show off their incredible talents.

## Foodbank Talk

4

Mark Richardson from Exeter Foodbank came in one lunchtime to talk to all our colleagues about the work the foodbank does where we learned that the users for the foodbank are increasing, with a 73% increase in the amount of three-day emergency food it gave out during the year. Thankfully, there is very little in terms of donations that can't be used and 11 supermarkets in Exeter have collection baskets for the foodbank.

## Great West Run

5

Eight runners from Devon and Cornwall took part in the arduous Exeter half-marathon in October where colleagues raised sponsorship funds of £1250.65 for Surfers Against Sewage. This was supported by the firm, which paid for colleagues' entry fee for the run and gave a £50 sponsorship amount for each colleague.

## Choir performances

6

The Rolling Scowns (our Exeter choir) performed at Exeter Cookery School on 3 December in support of the cookery school's event which was raising funds and donations for Exeter Foodbank. The Scown Roses (our Cornwall choir) also performed a Last Night of the Proms night in October and sang Christmas carols in December to raise funds for the Invictus Trust.

## Updates from charities

Given the unprecedented times we are facing our charities need our support more than ever. While many of our planned fundraising events have had to be put on hold, we are working hard to come up with new and innovative ways to fundraise in a socially distant way. Here's an update from each of our charities:

### Surfers Against Sewage

Surfers Against Sewage had places in the cancelled London Marathon but has instead taken part in the 2.6 Challenge, which took place on what should have been the date of the 40th London Marathon. The 2.6 Challenge encourages people to undertake any activity to raise money based on either 2.6 or 26 (26 miles is the length of the London Marathon). Surfers Against Sewage is also running a Return to Offender digital campaign encouraging people to photograph any littered branded plastic packaging they see while taking daily exercise, and share on social media with the hashtag #ReturnToOffender and #SurfersAgainstSewage. By tagging the brand in the campaign manufacturers can see the impact packaging has on the beaches and rivers.

### Invictus Trust

Before lockdown the Invictus Trust made up its donation to Sowenna (a mental health unit in Cornwall) to £100,000. They have reported that since lockdown they have been fairly quiet which they say was worrying in itself. They had to postpone their mental health conference aimed towards providing support to men suffering with their mental health.



### Exeter Foodbank

The foodbank has made more changes to its services recently than in the past 10 years whilst simultaneously losing half their volunteer base overnight and seeing client numbers increase by around 50%. The charity has experienced kindness in the midst of crisis with a local church helping to pre-pack boxes for clients and reporting extravagant examples of kindness and generosity. The foodbank has seen the average number of clients increase from about 160 a week to about 250 a week and in one week served around 350 clients. It has implemented a socially-distanced collection of pre-packed bags and a new home delivery service for those who are self-isolating/vulnerable. Exeter Foodbank has also trialled some new neighbourhood collections of items from people's doorsteps to enable those now shopping online to donate.

### Firm Charitable Giving

We are proud to be corporate members of:

- **Cornwall Community Foundation** (100 club)
- **Cornwall Wildlife Trust**
- **Roundtable**
- **The Falmouth Sea Shanty Festival** in support of the RNLI (which was sadly postponed this year)

We have also given charitable donations on behalf of the firm to:

- **Surfers Against Sewage** – £1,160 for completion by colleagues of the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies survey.
- **Surfers Against Sewage** – £190 for each colleague who took part in the firm quiz during lockdown.
- **BF Adventure** – supporting the Cornwall Business Challenge Event with payment for our team place even though the event did not go ahead.
- **Cornwall Wildlife Trust** – we are sponsoring the printing of 6000 of their 2020 Christmas cards, which means more of the money raised will go to Cornwall's wildlife and wild places.

### Truro Fireworks – November 2019

Stephens Scown sponsors this community fireworks display and 14 colleagues volunteered again on the gates. All money raised (usually between £4,000-£7,000) goes to Penhaligon's Friends, a Cornish charity supporting bereaved children, and Cornwall Air Ambulance.



### Easter Eggs Donation

Every Easter our staff enjoy an Easter egg provided by the firm. As staff were in lockdown over Easter the firm donated them to St Petroc's homeless charity in Cornwall and to Exeter Food bank in Devon, where they were gratefully received.



### Donations to Colleagues for their Personal Fundraising Efforts

The Giving Back team has a budget to distribute to colleagues undertaking personal challenges to raise money for charity. The contribution varies per challenge as follows:

Tier 1 – bake sales, 3k runs, bungee jump or physical events with little training	>	£10 contribution
Tier 2 – sky diving, physical events that require training for a shorter period (up to four months)	>	£50 contribution
Tier 3 – marathon, climbing Kilamajaro, any other event that requires more than four months' training	>	£100 contribution

^ **79% increase on last year**

The total sum distributed over the last 12 months since 1 September 2019 has been: £1764 out of a budget of £3,000. This is a 79% increase on last year. Despite the lockdown, colleagues have been involved in a wide range of impressive personal fundraising efforts, including driving rallies, running and biking challenges, and bake sales.

# VOLUNTEERING

Many of our colleagues use their free time away from work to support charitable causes or to support those in need. This is recognised, celebrated and supported by the firm and colleagues are often asked to take up external voluntary roles as part of their personal development. Colleagues may also use our flexible working policy to alter their hours so they may undertake voluntary work more easily in their free time.

We also encourage all staff to undertake volunteering during their work time via:

## V

Allowing every colleague with more than six months' service to have up to three paid days per annum to undertake their own volunteer work for a registered charity or CIC. This is applied pro rata for those that work part time.

## V

Firm organised volunteer days/sessions. This is organised by our Charity Committee.



### Litter picks and beach cleans

Colleagues in Cornwall participated in an afternoon of beach cleaning on the 16 September 2019 at Porthowan Beach in St Agnes. Colleagues cleaned in the mizzle and a lot of rubbish was collected including micro plastic where a dustpan and brush came in handy.

We set an objective of organising at least four colleague volunteer opportunities (in work time) per county (eight in total) and encourage teams to incorporate Giving Back into team socials or projects. This has not quite been met due to the lockdown restrictions so one we hope to improve on next year.



### Exeter Foodbank volunteering

We secured a number of volunteering slots with Exeter Foodbank in the run up to Christmas where colleagues helped to distribute food items or helped make hot drinks for the foodbank users. Following the success of these volunteering slots we partnered with Exeter Foodbank to create a permanent Thursday lunchtime volunteering slot for colleagues who could use half a volunteer day to help distribute food. Unfortunately, as this was due to start in March the lockdown restrictions have prevented this. As soon as Exeter Foodbank are able to allow external volunteers to assist we will be looking to start this up again.



# Volunteering

In the 12 months from 1 September to 31 August, 30 days of volunteer leave have been taken by 18 colleagues. Examples include:

## Sally's Cat Rescue:

Leah Waller, from our Cornwall dispute resolution team, took her volunteering days at Sally's Cat Rescue in St Austell, where sick, injured or homeless cats are rehabilitated and rehomed. Leah says: "I love animals and have several cats of my own, so it's nice to help those without a home and ensure that this local charity can carry on its amazing work. I cleaned the pens and the communal areas so the cats had a clean environment to relax in. I also steamed the communal areas and fed the cats. Then the most important part of the day – playing with the cats!"

## Cornwall Air Ambulance Trust:

Siobhan Lynch used her volunteering days to support Cornwall Air Ambulance Trust (CAAT) at their HQ in Newquay. One of the days involved handling admin for CAAT, as Siobhan explained: "I handled a lot of different tasks for the charity on the day, including greeting visitors who had come in with gifts and money to donate to the charity, taking their incoming calls and messages, opening and circulating post and updating their volunteer database. As a bonus, I got to meet one of their pilots and look inside one of the helicopters, and was able to see their huge wall map of where all their rescues were across Cornwall last year. The whole team were so friendly and helpful, and everyone I spoke to had good things to say about Stephens Scown!"



## Julian House:

Paula Wakeling-Basham, Sarah Hawkins, Jess Swallow and Jhenna Mortimer all volunteered at the Julian House homeless outreach centre in Exeter helping to set up the premises. Julian House is a charity dedicated to helping the homeless in a variety of ways, whether providing a safe shelter on winter nights or offering more long-term rehabilitation such as making preparations for employment. They were motivated by a desire to support Exeter's homeless population, and spent their volunteer leave at The Junction, assembling bunk beds and tidying up communal spaces.

## TEDxTruro:

Donna Black volunteered during an organised TEDx event to assist with the speakers and the social media for the event. The speakers she worked most closely with were Raynor Winn, author of *The Salt Path* and Dr Lynne Jones. These speakers talked about rural homelessness and a Migrant Child Storytelling Project. Donna told us that Dr Lynne Jones' talk brought tears to her eyes and the experience gave her the opportunity to get to know fascinating people who she would not normally meet.



## Jo Force bringing supplies to those self-isolating:

Jo helped out at her mother's assisted living home through shopping for residents and being a voice on the phone for those who need it. Jo explained "I'm helping four elderly ladies at present – everyone knows me at the home and they've been shouting out the window about things that they need when I arrive! I am also acting as a contact point for the residents, as if they ever need someone to talk to I've given them my number so they can phone me."



## Traci Roantree with Ottery Community Volunteers:

Traci signed up to this newly formed support scheme to help locals in Ottery St Mary and the surrounding area. An initiative which Traci helped to start by getting in touch with those who she knew lived alone in her local area by posting cards to them indicating that she was able to help with tasks they could not do whilst self-isolating, such as shopping or collecting prescriptions. This has developed into a taskforce with four teams covering deliveries, prescriptions, finance and handling phone calls or calling people who just want to have a chat.

Additional volunteering leave was also given to colleagues during the period of lockdown in order to help those who were in greater need due to the ongoing global pandemic. Colleagues were given two hours each week in which they could volunteer to help the elderly or vulnerable around them. This was in addition to our usual three days a year of volunteer time.

Examples of the amazing support our colleagues were able to offer include:

## Rosie Ward volunteered as a telephone befriender with Volunteer Cornwall:

Rosie has been providing phone support during lockdown by being in contact with a self-isolating resident in an assisted living home. Rosie has provided a line to the outside world with her calls and support to those who are lonely or worried during this difficult time.



It is amazing to see our colleagues able to offer vital support to those most in need during this challenging time.

# DID YOU KNOW.....

## Goals

We achieved a number of our goals this year, including the EV charge points, reducing our carbon footprint, continuing to educate our colleagues in their environmental impact, the level of pro bono work undertaken and maintaining the Giving Back Scownzone page to inspire and inform our colleagues.

Some of our other goals were not achieved due to the impact of the pandemic.

However, I am delighted that Giving Back has now become part of the fabric of what we do, even in difficult times.



Verity Slater  
Giving Back Partner  
30 September 2020

**958**   
hours spent on Giving Back

All legal teams (excluding legal aid) are now Paperlite and no longer have to keep paper files

**541**  
TREES SAVED  
through recycling our confidential waste

**0%**  
Of our waste goes to landfill - all our offices recycle

Increased accuracy in our carbon tracking through clearer expenses system

**8**  
PRO BONO  
PROJECTS  
COMPLETED

**£3k+**  
Raised for our charities

Staff Easter eggs donated to St Petrocs homeless charity in Cornwall and Exeter Foodbank in Devon

Electric vehicle charging points installed at 3 of our sites

Additional 2 hours per week volunteer leave given to staff during lockdown to help the elderly or vulnerable

**3 DAYS**  
paid volunteer leave each year

**30 days**  
of volunteer leave taken

**£1764**

Given by firm to colleagues for personal fundraising (78% increase on last year)

Firm charities are:  
• Surfers Against Sewage  
• Exeter Foodbank  
• Invictus Trust