

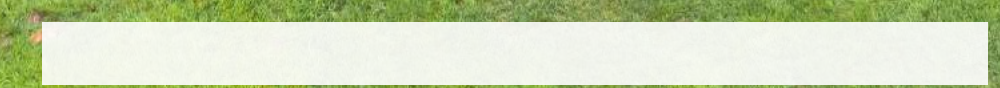


IMPACT REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2022 - MAY 2023

The first large law firm in the UK to become employee owned,
our B Corp™ Certification confirms our commitment
to balancing people, planet and profit.





Corporation

A MESSAGE FROM OUR MANAGING PARTNER

This is our first Impact Report as a B Corp™ business, having certified on 22 December 2022. This builds on the four Giving Back reports that we have published each year since August 2019. This impact report seeks to celebrate what we have achieved in the period September 2022 to 1 May 2023 but also to set out how we aim to improve on our existing impact in this current financial year (1 May 2023 to 30 April 2024).

At Stephens Scown, we have always cared about doing things the right way for our people, our clients, our planet and our community. As the first large law firm in the UK to become employee-owned, we have built a dynamic and innovative business dedicated to delivering for its clients and providing a rewarding and supportive workplace. Gaining our B Corp™ certification underlines our long-term commitment to also being a force for good in wider society. We are proud to be leaders in this field in our sector with only a handful of other law firms being a B Corp™, and being the first in our community in the South West. We hope many others will follow in our footsteps.

With the backdrop of global challenges to tackle and the ongoing threat to our environment, it is vital that we showcase just how we are making a difference and that we are part of a much bigger movement, proving there is a better way to do business.

The biggest impact for us as a firm in the last financial year has been the positive impact on morale and culture of having become a B Corp™. It has been amazing to see how colleagues have celebrated this and how it has filtered down into all our decision making and processes. This systematic and cultural embedding is an important part of becoming and maintaining our B Corp™ status.

We continue on our journey and there is still more to do to improve our impact, as this report sets out. I am proud of what our people have achieved and intend to achieve going forward, both in terms of our practices but also the practices of our clients that we can support and influence.



Richard Baker
Managing Partner

“We have always cared about doing things the right way for our people, our clients, our planet and our community”



OUR JOURNEY TO B CORP™ CERTIFICATION

2014

Stephens Scown has always been a great place to work. This was reflected in our ranking for seven consecutive years from 2014 in the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For list (mid-size businesses). This celebrates the very best in workplace practices, people development, wellbeing and employee engagement.

2016

In 2016 Stephens Scown became the first large law firm in the UK to become Employee Owned – setting up a Board of Employee Trustees and giving all eligible employees an equal share in our profits. In a sector which has traditionally seen partners alone share in the profits, the move attracted interest from across the UK and massively changed and shaped our unique culture. Our colleagues all have a vested interest in the success of Stephens Scown, the service we offer, and our clients' success.

“As an employee-owned business the above principles were really important to our people.”

2018

Our Giving Back programme was established in 2018, empowering employees to do good through four key pillars of; fundraising, volunteering, pro bono work, and reducing our environmental impact. We set up an internal Giving Back Team from all areas of the Firm driving forward on these initiatives and ensuring regular transparent reporting on our impact (see previous Giving Back Reports).

This programme established and embedded these commitments:

- 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.

It was through this programme that Giving Back Partner, Verity Slater first started exploring B Corp™. Verity said “I remember completing the B Impact Assessment in 2018 initially for ideas on how we could improve what we did: I was amazed and excited to see that at that early stage we already had enough points to be a B Corp™: I realised that if we could get the whole Firm behind this, it would be a great way to embed our drive to be a force for good and make sure that we were really having a positive impact. I knew that as an employee-owned business the above principles were really important to our people. I wanted to ensure that we were truly walking the talk on this without any greenwashing and continuing to build our positive impact year on year.”

2020

Verity took the idea to the Board in September 2020 and obtained buy-in from the Scownship Trustees and Partners in February 2021. We made the formal application to become a B Corp™ in August 2021.

2021

While awaiting verification, in November 2021 Stephens Scown set an ambitious target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2025. Since then, we have reduced our Carbon Footprint by 80%. In February 2022 we also established our Environmental and Local Purchasing Policy, which supports our own drive to lower our carbon and work with our suppliers to do so. These initiatives have positively impacted our own clients' carbon footprints.

2022

Over the last year we have also undertaken an internal project to understand what makes Stephens Scown special – what is at the heart of our culture and values. This took detailed soundings from our people. We established four main employer value propositions that really resonate with who we are: #Being Great Matters, #Having Fun Matters, #Owning It Matters and #Doing Good Matters.

Ensuring that we are 'Doing Good' and having a positive impact is an integral part of Stephens Scown. All our strategic plans going forward are underpinned by the need to remain true to our culture and values.

In December 2022 we became B Corp™ Certified, joining a growing group of businesses who are committed to balancing people, planet and profit.

HOW HAS BECOMING A B CORP™ IMPACTED US?

In the ten months since being certified, we have strengthened our internal processes and encouraged and inspired our colleagues to embrace B Corp™ principles in all they do. This has meant looking for ways to change their own practices and seeing opportunities on how we can improve as a Firm.

We ran a series of internal news stories and posts throughout B Corp™ month, talked about what it means in our regular face-to-face Business Updates and our whole Firm away day in September. We also created an information document available to everyone so they have the ability to explain B Corp™ and its importance to us as an organisation, as well as the impact it has.

We have also been inspiring our colleagues to explore with clients how we can support them in their own drive to be purposeful, sustainable businesses. Being part of the B Corp™ community means that we can share our knowledge, expertise, connections, and insight both with the B Corp™ community and with our client base. We know from client feedback that many of them care about how we look after our people and planet and want to be more sustainable themselves.

For example, in February this year, Hazel Sanders from our Employment team led a talk through the Business Network’s Positive Nature Network, a spin-off designed to connect businesses with the planet in a greener way. Her talk espoused the positive impact that B Corp™ has on a company, how to engage employees on the journey and policies that an organisation can put in place to support sustainability.

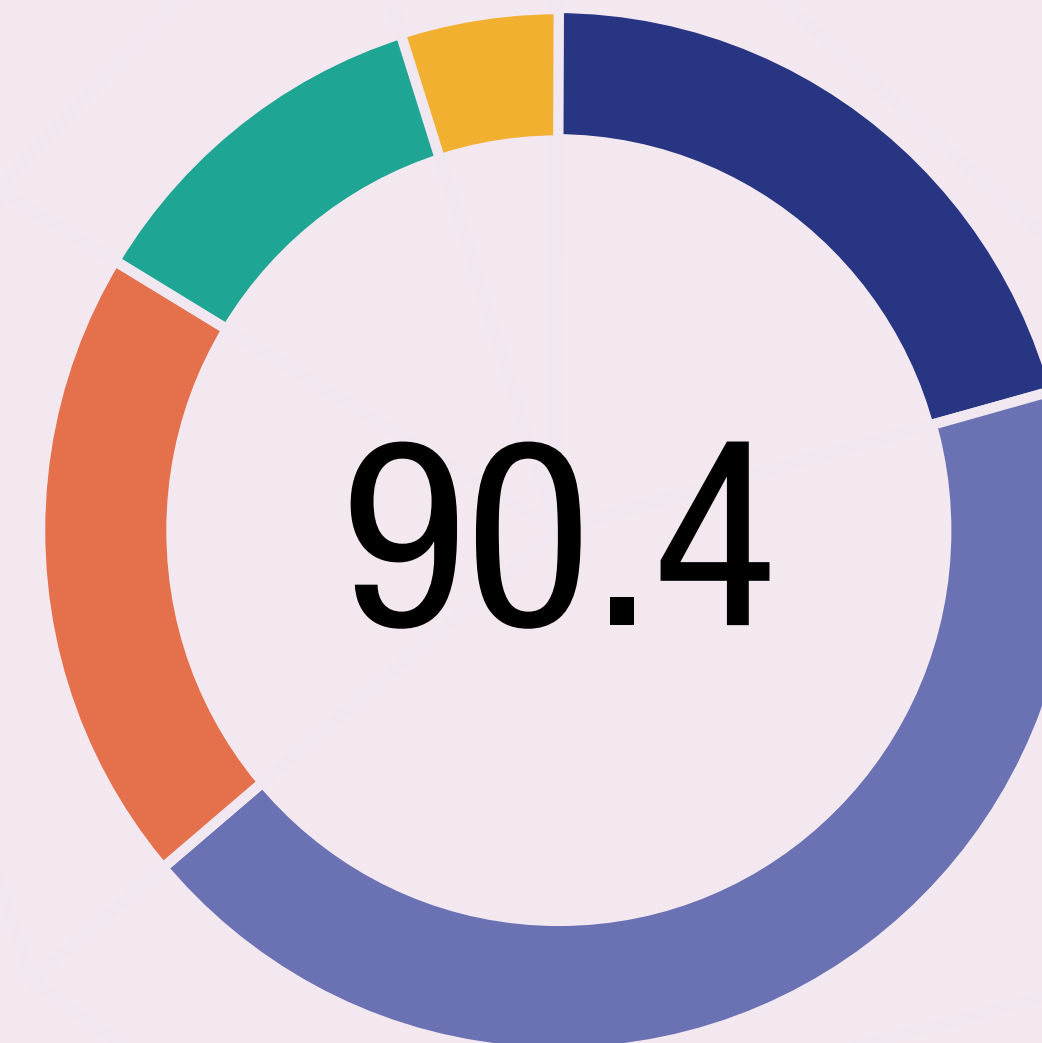
In March, Verity took part in the B23 Inspiration Day, acting as a panel member to share her experience of becoming a B Corp™. Verity and Laurie Trounce (Corporate Governance Partner) have then supported the subsequent spring B23 Programme, inspiring and helping to guide 23 Cornish businesses through their own B Corp™ application process.

We have also been able to support fellow accredited businesses in achieving their goals while staying true to their values and ethos. Strong connections have been built with new and existing clients who share the same values as us. We have also been able to influence other clients positively through our work, who might not have otherwise considered different or better ways to achieve their goals.

Our business decisions are led by our ethical approach. Last year we took the decision to not work with clients whose main business is weapons or munitions, pornography, tobacco, clients that operate casinos, or for clients where there is a clear and significant risk of human rights infringements. Screening is now in place across the Firm to ensure this.



OUR IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCORE



GOVERNANCE	18.7
MISSION AND ENGAGEMENT	1.9
ETHICS AND TRANSPARENCY	6.8
+ MISSION LOCKED	10
WORKERS	38.7
FINANCE AND SECURITY	14.6
HEALTH, WELLNESS AND SAFETY	9.0
CAREER DEVELOPMENT	4.4
ENGAGEMENT AND SATISFACTION	7.8
COMMUNITY	18.1
DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION	6.7
ECONOMIC IMPACT	4.3
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND GIVING	4.5
SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT	1.9
ENVIRONMENT	10.2
ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT	3.2
AIR AND CLIMATE	3.1
WATER	0.5
LAND AND LIFE	3.2
CUSTOMERS	4.3
CUSTOMER STEWARDSHIP	4.3

OUR GOALS FOR 2023/2024



GOVERNANCE

- Managers to have formal written performance evaluation that includes social or environmental goals.
- Board members to complete an annual conflict of interest questionnaire.
- External publication on our website of our board of directors for company transparency.



OUR PEOPLE

- Improve the green credentials of our pension.
- Ensuring annual employee satisfaction survey and ensuring good data on satisfaction.



COMMUNITY

- Set diversity improvement goals regularly reviewed by board after EDI survey.
- Get increased engagement with the EDI survey so we have accurate data on this, which can then be inputted into survey – much of our stats on this at present are ‘don’t know’.
- Increase the number of employees that do volunteering to 25% or above.
- Better tracking of the amount of time spent volunteering to see if we can increase to 1-2.4% of time.
- Screen / evaluate significant suppliers for social and environmental impact.
- Undertake (at least) eight Pro Bono projects in this year and record and celebrate paid work we do that supports community or sustainable projects or businesses.



ENVIRONMENT

- Ensure Taunton office meets requirements of accredited green building programme ie LEED Certified buildings and LEED equivalents, such as the Living Building Challenge, BREEAM, VERDE.
- Measure our Scope 3 Carbon Footprint for FY22/23 as a benchmark and set up our Scope 3 measurements to be more accurate for this year. Get this independently assessed.
- Prepare a detailed plan on further reducing our Carbon Footprint and share with the Firm on our half yearly Net Zero updates.
- Reduce our Scope 1 and Scope 2 carbon footprint by at least 2.5%. Produce a list of green hotels for staff to stay in for Exeter, Truro, London and Birmingham.
- Review the Firm’s cloud storage company and their carbon reduction plan.

GOVERNANCE

OUR IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCORE



OUR GOALS FOR 2023/2024

- Managers to have formal written performance evaluation that includes social or environmental goals.
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OWNING IT MATTERS



We already have a strong score in the Governance section but aim to improve this as previously set out, to help improve our transparency and to drive forward our B Corp™ engagement and goals.

Our employee ownership scheme, which we call Scownership, is all about giving everyone who works here a real stake in the business. No matter what role someone has, we are all part of the same team. Everyone’s contribution is equally important and everyone receives an equal share in the eligible profits.

Coming from all areas of the Firm, our Scownership trustees act as representatives for all staff, ensuring everyone has a voice. They regularly meet with the Board to give staff feedback, ask questions and raise issues – bringing about meaningful change.

We believe being employee owned is not only great for our employees but that our clients benefit too, with happy and engaged employees delivering better client service.

Our Trustees represent the interests of every colleague by facilitating open and transparent communication through all levels of the business. They act as custodians and role models for Stephens Scown’s One Firm ethos and celebrate our collective successes. They also champion Scownership and our colleagues both within and outside the Firm.

Trustees embody a channel of communication, aiding the regular flow of relevant information from the Board to colleagues and viceversa. They encourage and champion colleagues to engage in open, honest and discreet discussions with them, and channel their feedback and opinions to the Board for open discussion.

Trustees participate in operational discussions to provide the Board with opinions and guidance from colleagues’ points of view. Their participation in other action groups within the Firm allows them to listen, communicate ideas or concerns, and highlight areas to celebrate success.

They hold an annual AGM, providing a platform for discussion and an opportunity for colleagues to express their views or suggestions for improvement. Trustees assist the Finance team with communications relating to the profit share to aid increasing profitability for the benefit of all staff and administer and celebrate the distribution of the profit share and shed a light on Firm finances and budgets where appropriate.

In addition, they assist with internal and external Employee Ownership events, promoting our ethos and affording further opportunities. By publicising Employee Ownership articles (both those from colleagues, and other EO participants) they spark new lines of communication and use social media to shout about our successes. Meeting all new starters with the intention of inspiring new employees to embrace our ethos and immerse themselves in our culture, they are role models for our Employee Ownership and One Firm culture.

The Trustees’ new ‘Parish Project’ sees each of the Trustees assigned to a team within Stephens Scown, to further enhance the two-way flow of feedback and information between staff and trustees, and ultimately to the Board.

In addition, we have a Partners’ Council that links into the Board via the Chairman, Bill Wilkins.

Our employee ownership scheme, which we call Scownership, is all about giving everyone who works here a real stake in the business.

OUR SCOWNERSHIP TRUSTEES



Jackson Stayte

Dave Robbins

Guy Michell

Sam Moles

Candice Houseman

Kia Pearson

Kensa Jewell

Shavaun Womersley

OUR PEOPLE

OUR IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCORE



OUR GOALS FOR 2023/2024

- Improve the green credentials of our pension.
- Ensuring annual employee satisfaction survey and ensuring good data on satisfaction.



OWNING IT
MATTERS



HEALTH & SAFETY, ENGAGEMENT AND SATISFACTION

This year we launched our new Employee Value Proposition, #ItMatters to promote positive culture through a happy and stimulating work environment where our colleagues feel emotionally connected to each other and the business. The programme is based on four principles:



BEING GREAT MATTERS

Providing great quality work, working with great people.



OWNING IT MATTERS

As an employee-owned business, we empower our colleagues to think and make decision like business owners.



DOING GOOD MATTERS

Showing appreciation to our colleagues and giving back to our community.

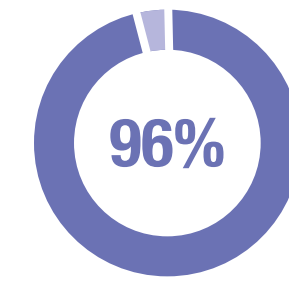


HAVING FUN MATTERS

Living lives enriched by work.

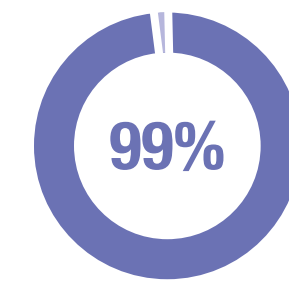


Wellbeing is at the heart of the Stephens Scown experience. Our HR team send out bi-monthly Pulse surveys to check on our colleagues' welfare and follow up on any concerns. Our most recent survey came back with a score of 96% of colleagues feeling 'happy at work'.



of colleagues feeling 'happy at work'

In our most recent engagement survey 19 out of the 24 questions received a combined score of over 90% of people who agreed or strongly agreed to the positive question. The highest scoring question was 99% of our people felt the Firm is well run.



of colleagues felt the Firm is well run

The Firm is also a signatory of the Mindful Employer Charter, which confirms our commitment to the wellbeing of our colleagues.

The HR team have a dedicated page on our intranet, providing easy access to an array of resources designed to enhance the employee experience and act as a one-stop-shop for documents and support services. It's available to everyone, is regularly updated, and ensures transparency throughout the business, being accessible from day one to new hires and a key point in the employee onboarding process.

Some of the resources available to our colleagues on the page includes:

- Short-term counselling support available via counsellors with whom we've partnered. There are three free sessions open to all at Stephens Scown, independent from the Firm to ensure total confidentiality. If longer-term help is required, our colleagues are encouraged to consider the options provided through our private medical insurance with BUPA.
- After six months service, everyone can join our private medical insurance scheme with BUPA. We pay for membership. BUPA also provide fast-tracked triage services where you don't need to be referred by a GP before accessing support for mental health, physiotherapy, and cancer services.
- Our Employee Assistance Programme is a confidential helpline open all day, every day, offering emotional wellbeing, practical support such as money matters and consumer rights, and is available to everyone in the business.
- We provide further videos and articles on financial, physical and mental wellbeing.

Dedicated menopause support via BUPA and information is available to those who experience the symptoms of the menopause or would like to find out how to support their colleagues or family members going through the menopause

We ensure that communication flows effectively between our colleagues and the leadership of the Firm, therefore we assigned a Trustee representative to each team to gather feedback and share ideas via regular parish meetings with our teams. We have also developed a system which provides a platform for our colleagues to put forward and vote on ideas to implement in the firm. Regular business updates are provided via video and in-person events from the leadership team to keep everyone informed on the strategy, vision and performance of the firm.

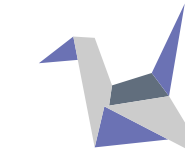
FINANCIAL SECURITY AND BENEFITS

Stephens Scown is committed to the Living Wage Foundation principles, as well as supporting all staff with a cost-of-living payment made to help ease financial worries during the recent financial crisis.

Being employee-owned means that all employees of the Firm regardless of status, benefit from equal profit share payment, which is paid annually. In addition to the above, the Firm offers a wide range of other financial benefits, including:



Enhanced Pension Contributions



Enhanced Maternity and Paternity Pay



Enhanced Sick Pay



Cycle to Work Scheme



Reduced fees for legal services



Recruitment Referral Bonus



Long Service Awards



Funding for qualifications

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Through having a clear Promotion policy, we ensure consistency and transparency of the routes for progression for our colleagues. We also support the development of our people through apprenticeship, trainee solicitor programmes and by funding qualifications.

Recently, we created an Associates Group, the purpose of which is the development of next generation leaders in the Firm through regular events and training sessions.

Training resources are easily available to all colleagues with a wide range of experience, and delivery methods accommodating for various preferences and learning styles. The HR team supports colleagues with sourcing appropriate training for individuals and teams. With many IT projects and improvements underway, our in-house IT Training Team provides much needed technical training to keep everyone's IT skills up to date.

Our colleagues are encouraged to maintain professional membership subscriptions with professional bodies relevant to their practice area or their role within the business to keep their industry related knowledge up to date and keep abreast of any upcoming changes and developments. The cost of professional subscriptions is covered by the Firm.

**Training resources
are easily available
to all colleagues.**

TRAINING CONTRACTS

Our trainee recruitment policy is inclusive, accepting applications from a range of different degrees and not exclusively law degrees. We do not set a minimum grade classification to apply and all applications are manually assessed before candidates are invited to an assessment day. Our assessment day is crafted to ensure that there are tasks tailored to suit a diverse range of personality types, in recognition of both diversity and inclusivity. We also provide a growing apprenticeship offering, ranging from level 2 qualifications, up to level 7 in our legal and support teams. All apprentices have a 12-weekly meeting with their course coach and their supervisor, ensuring both workplace and studies are working hand in hand and the apprentice is progressing in the right direction.

Our trainees and apprentices all have monthly catch ups with their Graduate Recruitment and Apprenticeships Officer. This provides a safe space for individuals to discuss their progression, wellbeing and any concerns or questions they may have. They are also asked what support they require to ensure they are getting the most from their training programme.

We also have a training team that consists of Partners from a range of different backgrounds and legal teams who oversee the training journey. They meet on a monthly basis to ensure our programme is current, relevant and progressive. The training team conduct biannual appraisals with our trainee solicitors to ensure they are developing the skills they need for a bright future.

**Employee engagement
and wellbeing is at the
heart of the Stephens
Scown experience.**



COMMUNITY

OUR IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCORE

18.1

OUR GOALS FOR 2023/2024

- Get increased engagement with the EDI survey so we have accurate data on this, which can then be inputted into survey – much of our stats on this at present are ‘don’t know’.
- Set diversity improvement goals regularly reviewed by the Board after EDI survey.
- Increase the number of employees that do volunteering to 25% or above.
- Better tracking of the amount of time spent volunteering to see if we can increase to 1-2.4% of time.
- Screen / evaluate significant suppliers for social and environmental impact.
- Undertake (at least) eight Pro Bono projects in this year and record and celebrate paid work we do that supports community or sustainable projects or businesses.



We have set the most goals in this area as we believe we can improve our impact and as this aligns with our annual Giving Back program goals.

Events that we hold are catered for by local providers using produce sourced locally.

SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

We encourage local purchases for community investment and to help local farmers and suppliers. Events that we hold are catered for by local providers using produce sourced locally and are at least 50% vegan/vegetarian.

In February 2022 we introduced a policy on environmental and local purchasing, which confirms our principles to encourage the purchase and use of materials, products and services that incorporate environmental, social, community, and performance goals throughout our supply chain.

In May 2023 we introduced a more detailed procurement policy that sets out the tender requirements and environmental and social due diligence required on any procurement over the value of £5,000.

This year our goal is to screen / evaluate our significant suppliers for social and environmental impact against that due diligence requirement.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

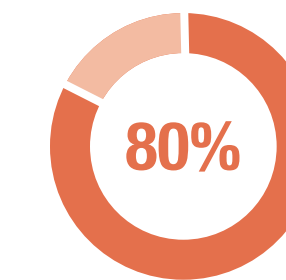
Continuing to build and embed a culture that positively promotes Equality, Diversity & Inclusion is really important to us and is something that underpins all four of our strategic pillars of Growth, One Firm, Client Service, and particularly Scowner Experience.

We have already taken strides to enable positive change through, for example, unconscious bias training for partners, our Women in Law Group, our better gender balanced Board and partnership, and our recent inclusion of personal pronouns on our email signatures.

Our Gender Pay Gap is reported annually, ensuring staff are aware of progress and that details are shared openly. The current report is [here](#).

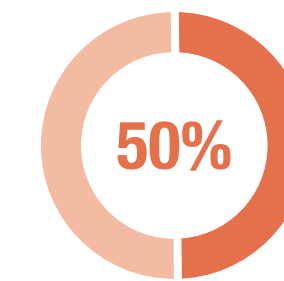
The number of women on our Board is currently above 50%, well above the average female representation on the boards of FTSE 100 companies, which currently sits at around 40%.

One of our goals this year has already been met – we were really pleased with some incredibly positive responses to our July 23 ED&I survey, with 80% of respondents saying they either strongly or mildly agreed that diverse identities, ideas, values and ways of thinking are respected and treated fairly at Stephens Scown. We had a 58% response rate which was the highest we have ever achieved. This will now form the basis of our improvement plans.



The number of respondents saying they strongly or mildly agreed that diverse identities, ideas, values and ways of thinking are respected and treated fairly at Stephens Scown.

As a result of feedback, we have done a lot of work on our induction and onboarding process to make it as streamlined, welcoming and inclusive as possible for our new joiners. Our Business Support teams have reviewed and updated the process, mapping it out step by step to enable transparency and accountability. Our Team Leaders have also been involved, as their input was an invaluable part of the process.



The number of women on our Board

As part of the review of our careers' pages on our website, we updated our recruitment adverts to promote social mobility and remove barriers to joining Stephens Scown by inviting people from all backgrounds and abilities to apply to for our roles, including those working part-time and looking for job share opportunities.

We appreciate that our people may have responsibilities or interests outside of their work. Our 'Best of Both Worlds' hybrid working policy provides a framework for our colleagues to balance both their careers and personal lives without compromising on either.

We have further progressed the process, introducing goodie bags for new hires, and revamping our careers pages on our website. We are also doing the same with our leavers process, and our maternity leavers and returners process.



CHARITABLE GIVING (A GIVING BACK PILLAR)

Overall, our Firm charitable giving over the last financial year (1 May 2022 to 30 April 2023) has amounted to £20,433. This includes donations that we make to support charitable events or organisations, donations made to support our colleagues' own fundraising efforts and money raised by our Charity Committee.

In this period the Committee raised £7,486.37 for our three Firm charities Man Down (Cornwall), MIND (Firm-wide) and Hospiscare (Devon). These charities are voted for every two years by our colleagues.

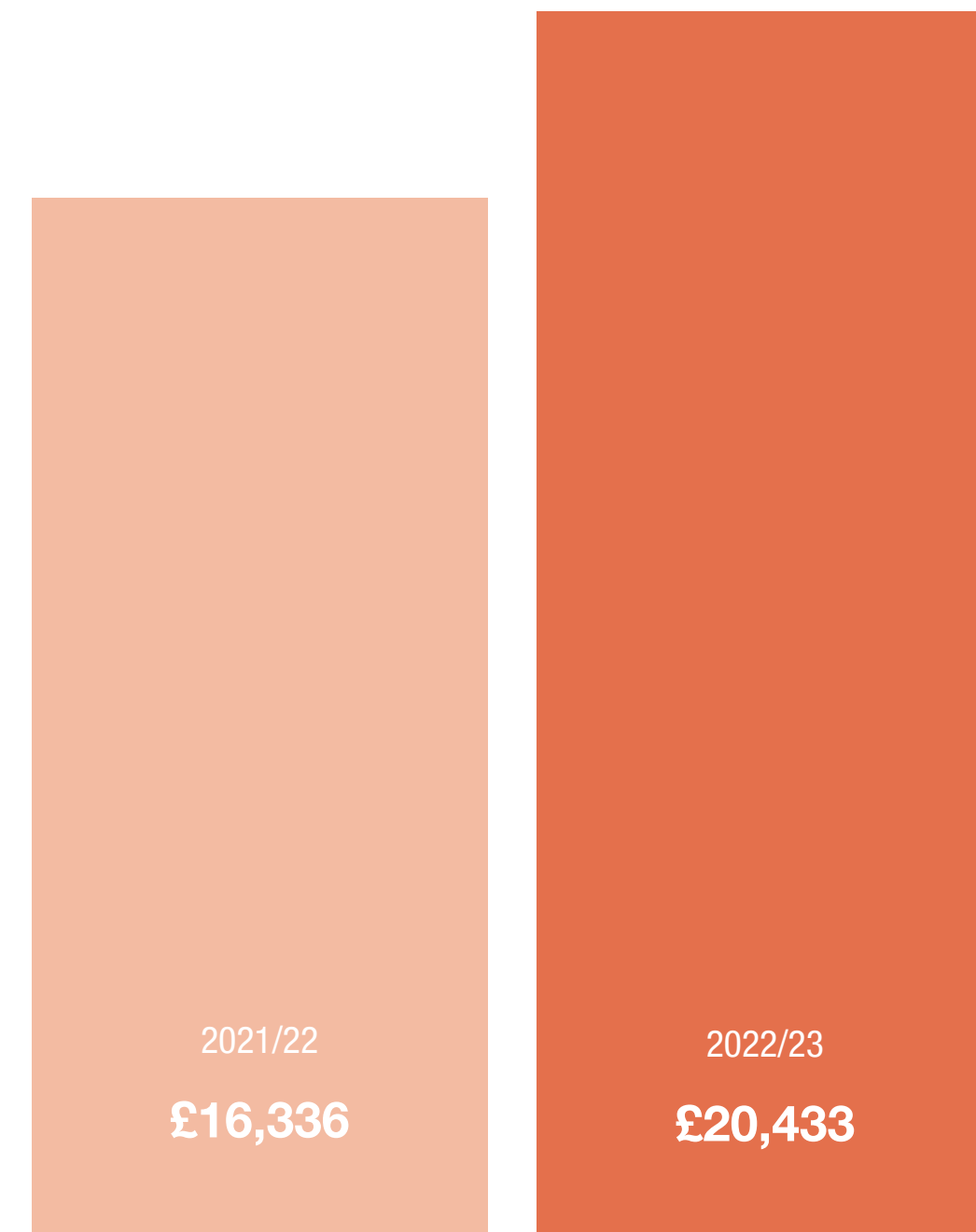


Last year's total charitable giving was £16,336, so this was a 20% increase, which is fantastic.

As part of the charity events, our Charity Committee run several events across all offices to encourage giving and participation from staff for events such as a Christmas Auction, bake sales, world cup sweepstakes and quizzes. The charity tuck shop has also been very popular this year!

Colleagues receive up to £100 as a donation from the Firm for their personal fundraising efforts. Examples of the great fundraising this year included the one million step challenge, the polar bear challenge – colleagues swimming in the sea all year round to raise monies – marathon running and 100 miles walking challenge.

20% ▲
Increase in the total Firm charitable giving over the financial year.



VOLUNTEERING (A GIVING BACK PILLAR)

Colleagues across the Firm are involved in many charitable organisations inside and outside of work. Currently our people hold 79 voluntary positions such as charity Trustees or school Governors.

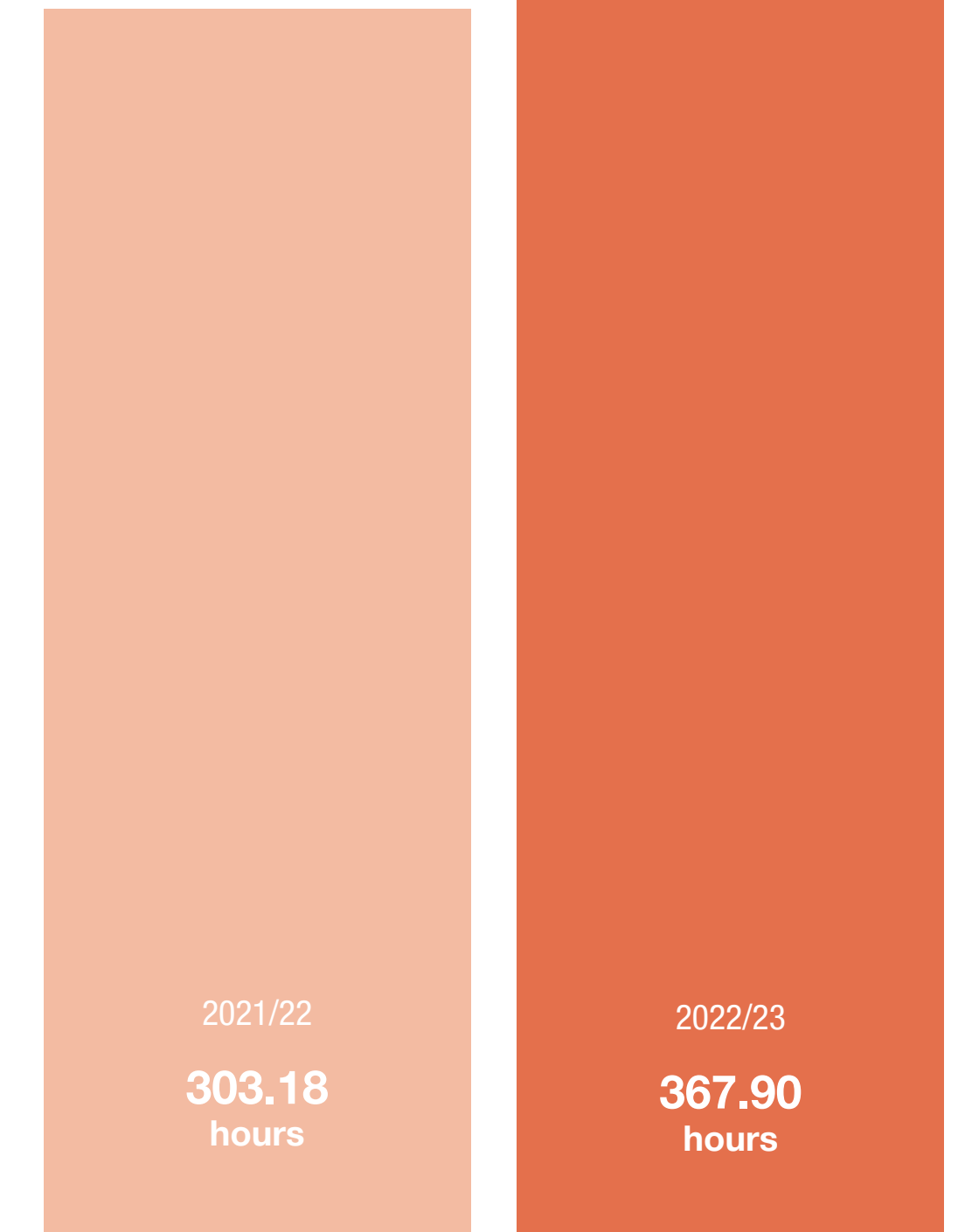


79 The number of our people who hold voluntary positions.

We are keen to encourage employees to be involved in the community they live in through volunteering or supporting charitable causes. They can use their three days' paid volunteer leave to do so or alter their hours to undertake voluntary work more easily in their free time.

In our financial year 21/22 we logged 303.18 hours on our time recording system as being used for CSR and Charity Work. This is only recorded by our legal advisors during the working day. In this financial year 22/23 this increased to 367.90 hours – an 18% increase.

18% ▲
Increase in the number of recorded hours being used for CSR and Charity Work.



In the Financial Year 21/22, 45 full-time employees in the Firm undertook paid volunteer leave. This was 20% of the full-time employees.

In this Financial Year 22/23 the number was 43 –18% of our total full-time staff. This is how B Corp™ measures this – which does not include any of our part-time colleagues or equity partners. The total number of people volunteering in that period was 49 - although we think some were unrecorded.

VOLUNTEERING CONTINUED

We've seen the continuing trend in teams choosing to use their Team Away Day to do volunteer work, demonstrating this behaviour is better embedded in our Firm culture this year compared to last year. The Firm has been encouraging teams to use volunteering to get out of the office for the day and improve relationships with colleagues as well as giving back.



In March, the Employment and Immigration team used one of their volunteer days to help at Dartmoor Zoo, assisting the maintenance team as they cleared out the lynx enclosure to improve the big cats' environment ready for it to be extended and enhanced.



Staff also spent time at Poltimore House in Exeter, helping with grounds maintenance, work which is done entirely by volunteers. It was a chance to explore the historic site and to give back to the community.



Board member Catherine Mathews used her experience to attend a young entrepreneurs event hosted by the local university. Offering advice and guidance, she listened to pitches from students and helped to select a winning proposal, engaging with the next generation of business leaders who were focused on sustainability in work.

The Firm has been encouraging teams to use volunteering to improve relationships as well as giving back.



Our Construction team and members of the Cornwall Professionals Group both undertook beach cleans, helping to protect the local environment. Being such a key part of the Cornish landscape, the work helps to maintain the beauty of the spaces as an important part of the county's tourism sector.



Teams from our Exeter and Truro offices have undertaken litter picks in the local community, enhancing and protecting the local environment and talking about the work with locals to encourage further engagement.



Board member Verity Slater, used a volunteer day to support Cornwall Community Foundation with their away day in March. She is a Trustee and chairs their HR Committee using her expertise as an Employment lawyer.



Alistair Tudor used his time to support Reminiscence Learning, a dementia charity in Wellington, Somerset. Alistair said it was great meeting the volunteers and understanding their motivations and reasons for being involved with the charity. There were a lot of very personal stories of the effects of dementia and the excellent work that the charity is doing.

PRO BONO (A GIVING BACK PILLAR)

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 charities or community interest companies (CIC). 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).

In the six month period since our last Giving Back Report (to August 2022) we have completed the following projects.

Teams are encouraged to undertake pro bono work for charities or community interest companies.



TR7 Skatepark CIC

We have provided TR7 Skatepark with pro bono governance support following its temporary closure earlier this year. This is Cornwall's one of a kind skatepark offering an innovative rope system / harness set up that makes it easy for anybody to give skateboarding a go. This approach to learning means it specialises in teaching skateboarding to all ages and levels and welcomes autistic and SEN skaters. It was great to provide support to this not-for-profit enterprise and we look forward to seeing the skatepark return soon.



Laurie Trounce and Jennifer Short-Martin



Power of Pads Charity

We have been delighted to assist the Power Of Pads, a UK-based charity committed to helping girls and women in Kenya. The mission of the charity is to end period poverty by providing sanitary products and start-up business funding, with the aim of improving educational outcomes, increasing empowerment and achieving financial independence for girls and women. Our work has involved charity governance support, including advice in connection with proposed changes to the Charity's governing document and name.



Laurie Trounce and Jennifer Short-Martin

Theatre/Arts-based Charity

This was a confidential matter, but the client said: "We are incredibly grateful to Sophie Petrucci for the invaluable pro bono help and advice given to us. Organisations such as ours really appreciate the opportunity to tap into expert advice in order that we may continue our own work in the community from a well-informed position. The advice we have received has been friendly and informal, while still being given in an extremely professional manner. Stephens Scown is to be congratulated for providing this much-needed service. I'm sure many other groups and organisations, such as ourselves, are equally grateful to have benefitted from this scheme.



Sophie Petrucci



Employment Lawyers Association

The Employment Tribunal Litigants in Person Support Scheme provided by the Employment Lawyers' Association and supported by HMCTS. Joe Nicholls, Employment Law Partner, provided free support through a clinic to unrepresented individuals who are pursuing claims in the employment tribunal.



Joe Nicholls



St Petrocs Charity

St Petrocs is a leading charity working to end homelessness in Cornwall. In 2022 they actively worked with 1271 individuals, with 311 staying in St Petrocs houses. Helen Thomas, one of our senior associates, was delighted to be able to assist them in November 2022 on a pro bono basis with a legal issue involving one of those houses. Helen helped them find a good solution and also to set up appropriate processes to enable the charity to manage any similar issues themselves going forward. Henry Meacock, their chief executive said 'thank you for supporting us with this matter. It is great to have a way forward that we can progress. We really appreciate the pro bono support'.



Helen Thomas



Man Down CIC

Advice was given by Jeremy Crook, Associate, to one of Man Down's regular volunteers regarding a debt situation. Jeremy was able to advise and resolve the situation, reducing the stress and concern for all involved. As Man Down is an organisation that works to support men with mental health concerns, it was great to be able to assist in this way.



Jeremy Crook

ENVIRONMENT

OUR IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCORE

10.2

OUR GOALS FOR 2023/2024

- Ensure Taunton Office meets requirements of accredited green building programme ie LEED Certified buildings and LEED equivalents, such as the Living Building Challenge, BREEAM, VERDE.
- Measure our Scope 3 Carbon Footprint for FY22/23 as a benchmark and set up our Scope 3 measurements to be more accurate for this year. Get this independently assessed.
- Prepare a detailed plan on further reducing our Carbon Footprint and share with the Firm on our half yearly Net Zero updates.
- Reduce our Scope 1 and Scope 2 carbon footprint by at least 2.5%. Produce a list of green hotels for employees to stay in for Exeter, Truro, London and Birmingham.
- Review the Firm's cloud storage company and their carbon reduction plan.



DOING GOOD MATTERS



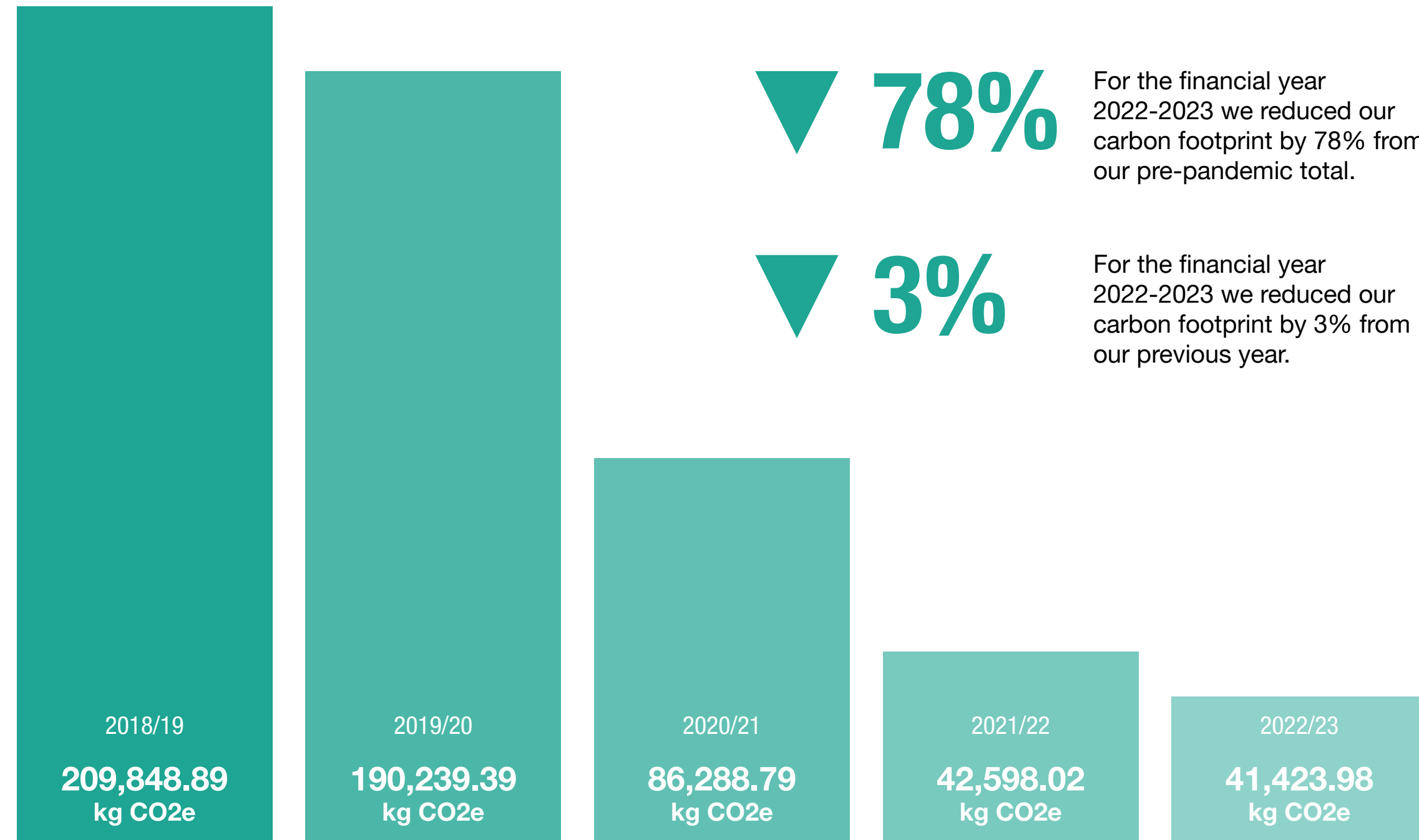
NET ZERO CARBON

We are on a journey towards Net Zero Carbon – seeking to lower our carbon footprint, having committed to being Net Zero by the end of 2025.

One of our core values is 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.

These are updated figures from our last Giving Back report as our processes enable us to measure this more accurately year-on-year.



There are several key factors for the continued reduction in our carbon footprint:

- Increased use of electric vehicles and public transport
- Continued reduction in business travel compared to pre-pandemic levels
- Improvement in the monitoring and control of the offices’ ambient temperatures
- Closure of St Austell premises

Although travel is still down by 55% compared to pre-pandemic levels, 2021/22’s increase in staff travel, to attend training and seminars has continued in 2022/23.

However, staff mileage by electric vehicles has increased by a staggering 215%, with the overall use of electric vehicles increasing by 1%. Unsurprisingly, the use of train has decreased by 3% from the last financial year due to the disruption caused by strikes, but there is evidence that travel by train would have increased if the strikes had not taken place. There is also a trend towards car sharing and with the overall carbon impact of travel by car down by 4% there are signs that the introduction of our Green Travel Policy in 2022 is being adhered to and making a difference. We have enhanced the policy in this period by providing additional mileage expenses that can be claimed by those that car share.

The Firm is currently undertaking a major review with an external verifier to ensure all our Scope 3 emissions are recorded to provide a clear and accurate picture of our actual carbon impact. By recording our Scope 3 emissions, it is likely that our overall carbon footprint will increase in 2023/24. There may also be impacts from the new Taunton office and IT infrastructure improvements.

Our goals this year are aimed at understanding, managing and reducing an increased carbon impact, so as to continue our net zero journey.

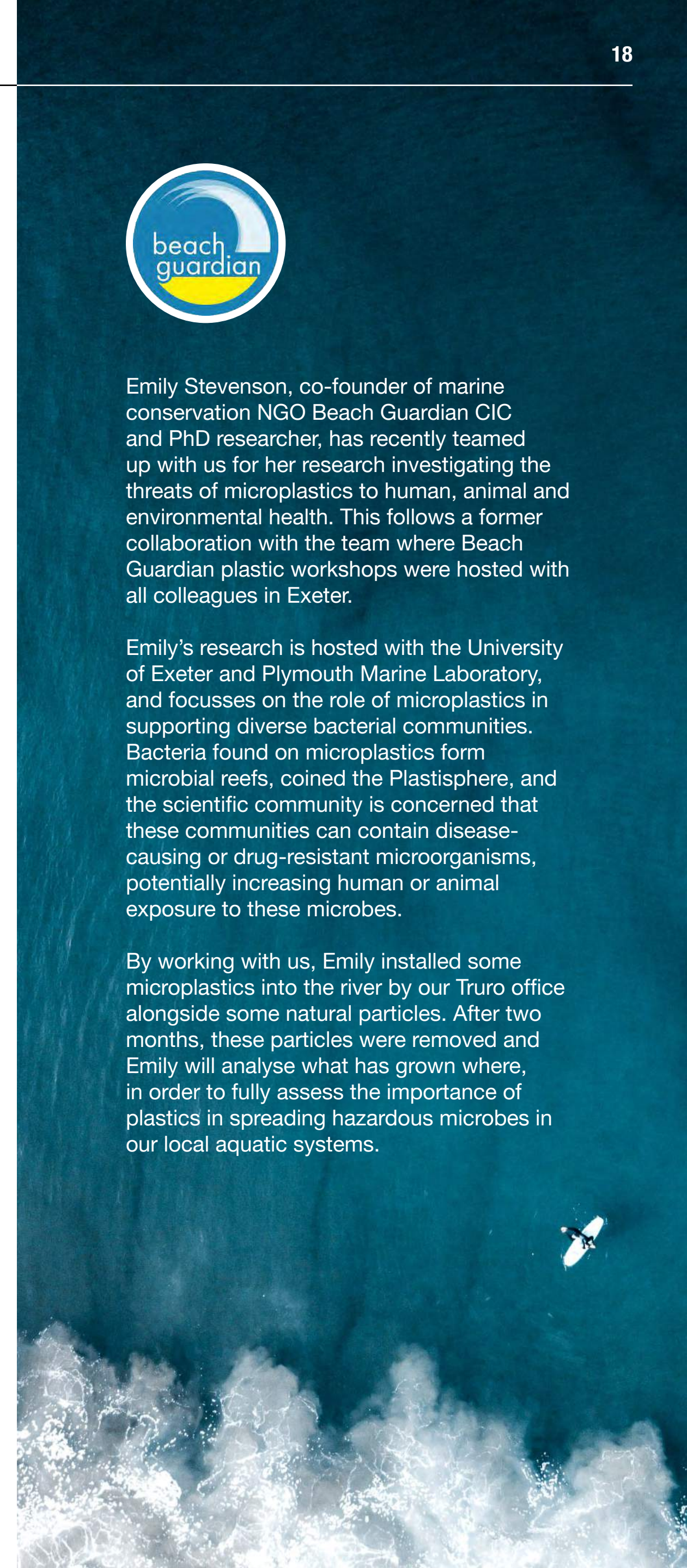


Emily Stevenson, co-founder of marine conservation NGO Beach Guardian CIC and PhD researcher, has recently teamed up with us for her research investigating the threats of microplastics to human, animal and environmental health. This follows a former collaboration with the team where Beach Guardian plastic workshops were hosted with all colleagues in Exeter.

Emily’s research is hosted with the University of Exeter and Plymouth Marine Laboratory, and focusses on the role of microplastics in supporting diverse bacterial communities. Bacteria found on microplastics form microbial reefs, coined the Plastisphere, and the scientific community is concerned that these communities can contain disease-causing or drug-resistant microorganisms, potentially increasing human or animal exposure to these microbes.

By working with us, Emily installed some microplastics into the river by our Truro office alongside some natural particles. After two months, these particles were removed and Emily will analyse what has grown where, in order to fully assess the importance of plastics in spreading hazardous microbes in our local aquatic systems.

We want to leave behind a world that the next generation can enjoy.



CLIENTS

OUR IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCORE



BEING GREAT MATTERS



We take our responsibility to provide a high-quality legal service very seriously. 100% of our services are accredited by Lexcel – which is a Law Society standard that verifies the quality of our legal practice management.

Client experience is hugely important to us – it's one of our strategic pillars. Our Brand Engagement and Customer Experience team includes a specialist Client team which focuses on measuring and improving client experience.

Our clients are best placed to comment on their experience of the service we provide. To measure and test client satisfaction and outcomes, we use a survey system provided by a specialist external organisation Insight 6, called Instant Insight which help us to analyse the feedback we receive, provide actionable comments and benchmark our business against others within our sector.

As well as sending our client feedback surveys, we also undertake extensive key client reviews. These reviews are undertaken via an independent Client Experience Consultant, which ensures the client feels more comfortable giving feedback than they would directly to a member of the Firm. These reviews result in in-depth feedback and guidance for the teams, encouraging them to reflect on their own performance and adapt their approach to client work further enhancing our already excellent customer satisfaction ratings.

In addition, our newly formed client services team has developed a bespoke, custom-built new streamlined enquiry system, which ensures enquiries received are allocated to legal advisors faster and with a better understanding of the client's requirements, allowing for a better match of advisor and client.

This means that legal advisors receive full details of the matter, so are better prepared for the initial discussion, and the client gets more time receiving advice, saving them money. It places the client at the heart of each legal advisor's day with particular focus on how clients are feeling at specific stages of their matter.

This year we have been recognised by the following awards for our Client Experience process and results:



Modern Law Awards

Shortlisted for two awards in the categories Best Client Care and Workplace Wellbeing Awards.



Family Law Awards

Nominated for best Legal Support.



Exeter Living Awards

Joint winner of Best Legal Services Firm.



Business Leader Awards

Winner of the Customer Excellence Award.

IMPACTS ARISING FROM OUR WORK

Stephens Scown works with the Legal Aid Agency to provide legal aid to clients who have very limited income and assets or those at risk of significant harm.

This includes cases where the Local Authority is considering removing or has removed children from a parent's care due to concerns as to that child's safety and wellbeing. We frequently represent parents but also children themselves acting through their Children's Guardian. Our work ensures that children's rights are represented through what is always a difficult time.

Jade Kent from our Corporate team is a Championing Social Care Ambassador, an area close to her heart. It's a way for Jade to further spread the message of the incredible value of the social care sector and to demonstrate how professionals can support those on the front line to make the sector even better. She's used her role to write articles and attend key events – spending time to support those who make a tangible contribution and difference in the healthcare field.

Our Employment team run regular Ethical HR Breakfast events, meeting with HR professionals to discuss how they can find ethical ways to deal with challenging situations in their jobs, and thinking about the difficult questions, for example around mental health, duty of care, and balancing the needs of others with those of the organisation.

In a recent event Employment Partners Ellie Hibberd and Laura McFadyen discussed how HR teams and managers balance confidentiality, with employee rights around privacy, alongside the organisation's need to process information and manage an issue, and how HR professionals can help look after themselves when dealing with such issues.

Client experience is hugely important to us. It's one of our strategic pillars.



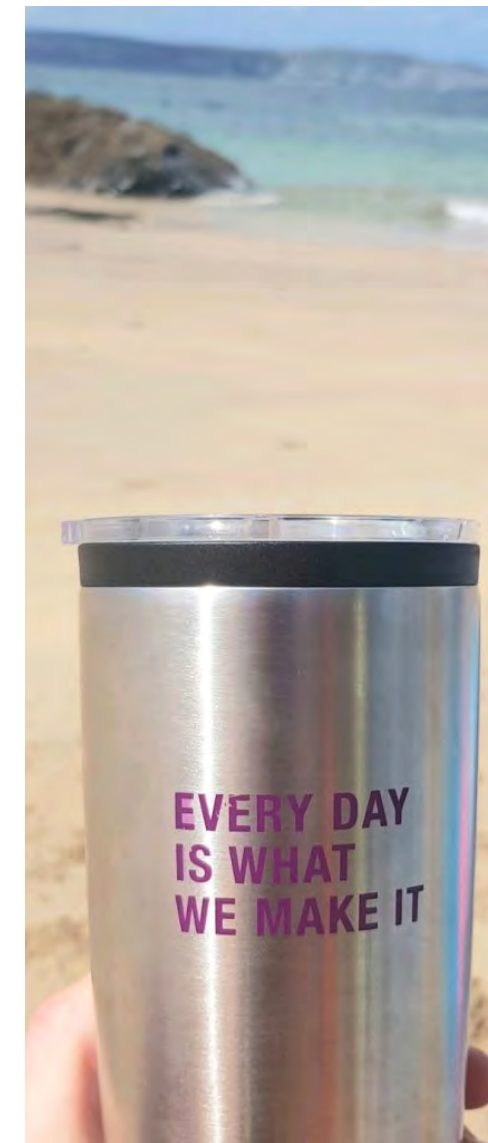
OUR CONCLUSION

We are delighted with the progress being made across the Firm in relation to our sustainability and positive impact, balancing people, planet and profit. While this report may only cover the 6 month period up to 1 May 2023, we are already making great strides in moving forward a number of initiatives and campaigns to support increased awareness and tangible results for the good of our people, our communities and the planet.

The main success from this period – and a personal achievement for Verity Slater – was achieving our B Corp™ accreditation. It was no easy task and took a tremendous effort, but has really helped to embed across the Firm and cemented the importance of ensuring that all our practices are in line with B Corp™ principles going forward.

Setting this year's goals has been a great way to continue to drive towards further positive impact and has set us in a strong direction for this year's priorities.

We look forward to reporting on our progress next year.



367.90
volunteering hours

logged on our time recording system by our legal advisors as being used for CSR and charity work during the working day.

£20,433
raised for charitable giving

This includes donations that we make to support charitable events or organisations, donations made to support our colleagues' own fundraising efforts and money raised by our Charity Committee.

79 colleagues hold voluntary positions

such as charity Trustees or school Governors.

3 days paid volunteer leave each year for every colleague.

0 % waste to landfill

None of our waste goes to landfill, and all of our offices recycle.

261
trees saved

through recycling our confidential shredding at each of our offices.

88 % of our stationery is eco friendly, including all of our colleagues being gifted a reusable water bottle.

B Corp™ Certified

In December 2022 we became B Corp Certified. To help raise awareness, employees take part in beach cleans and litter picks. We also use local suppliers and local produce, and strive to use other B Corps™.





Follow our journey here
stephens-scown.co.uk

