



IMPACT REPORT

MAY 2023 - APRIL 2024

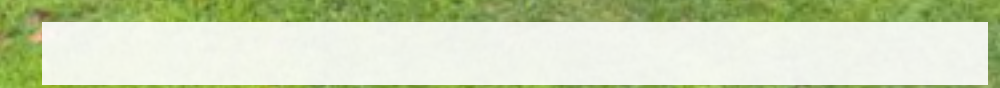
The first large law firm in the UK to become employee owned, our B Corp™ Certification confirms our commitment to balancing people, planet and profit.



Certified



®



Corporation



A MESSAGE FROM OUR MANAGING PARTNER

This impact report seeks to celebrate what we have achieved in the period 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2024 – our first full financial year since becoming a B Corp™. We also confirm our goals to improve on our existing impact in this next financial year (1 May 2024 to 30 April 2025).

At Stephens Scown, we have always cared about doing things the right way for our people, our planet, and our community, and so our B Corp™ Certification sealed our long-term commitment to being a force for good. Building on the existing Stephens Scown culture, where Doing Good Matters, and six years since our Giving Back initiative was first introduced, we know there is more still to be done, and that our accreditation is merely a step on our journey.

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. 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 and have taken active steps this year to support others to do so.

2023/2024 has been a very strong year for Stephens Scown, with the Firm achieving the greatest financial growth and performance it has ever seen, while not only keeping our culture and values but building on these. We have opened a new office in Taunton, expanded our teams across the Firm and started working with exciting new clients.

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

This is a testament to the impact being a B Corp™ has had. The positive impact on our staff morale and performance was confirmed by our ranking within the Sunday Times Best Places to Work 2024 list, following our excellent employee engagement survey results.

These last 12 months have shown what we’re capable of achieving and highlighted the positive impact that B Corp™ has had on our colleagues (called Scowners), and how that passion and enthusiasm has also had a positive impact for our clients.

Thanks to everyone who has supported our B Corp™ journey and helped show that Stephens Scown is a brilliant place to do business, and which strives to make a difference not only for our clients, but also for the environment and communities in which we operate.

Richard Baker
Managing Partner

OUR JOURNEY TO B CORP™ CERTIFICATION AND BEYOND

2014 A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

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).

2016 BECOMING EMPLOYEE OWNED

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.

All our strategic plans going forward are underpinned by the need to remain true to our culture and values.

2018 GIVING BACK

In 2018, our Giving Back programme was established, 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 Committee from all areas of the Firm, driving forward on these initiatives and ensuring regular transparent reporting on our impact. 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 are 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: *"We completed 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 MAKING THE APPLICATION

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

2021 HAVING A POSITIVE IMPACT

While awaiting verification, in November 2021 Stephens Scown set an ambitious target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by the end of 2025. Since then, we have reduced our Scope 1 and 2 Carbon Footprint by 71%.

We also undertook 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.

2022 BECOMING CERTIFIED

In February 2022 we also established our Environmental and Local Purchasing Policy, which supports our own drive to lower our carbon footprint and work with our suppliers to do so. These initiatives have positively impacted our own clients' carbon footprints.

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

2023 APPLYING OUR CULTURE

In September 2023 new firm behaviours launched, the practical application of our culture: what we want our people to know, feel and do on a day to day basis.

2024 ONE OF THE BEST PLACES TO WORK

In April 2024 we were featured as one of the Sunday Times Best Places to Work (big organisation category), from our employee survey.

WHAT HAS BEING A B CORP™ MEANT FOR US THIS YEAR?

INCREASED EMPLOYEE AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

One of the key challenges since becoming a B Corp™ has been ensuring that every part of our business is engaged and actively enhancing our B Corp™ values. This started with a comprehensive employee engagement internal communication campaign, which has included ways individuals can make a difference through the choices they make and the work they do, and group initiatives they can get involved with inside and outside the Firm. We also engaged fully with B Corp™ month, raising the profile of our B Corp™ Champions in external communications across web and social media channels.

RECOGNITION OF OUR B CORP™ JOURNEY

A fitting reflection of the hard work and commitment to bringing B Corp™ to life for the Firm, Verity Slater was nominated for a UK-wide industry award at the Legal 500 ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) Awards in the category of Environmental/Sustainability: Private Practice Champion (internal).

Receiving the congratulatory confirmation email, it was noted that: *“Our team at the Legal 500 felt that your submission truly stood out and earned you a well-deserved place among the finalists.*

“Being shortlisted is a remarkable achievement that reflects your commitment to sustainability, responsible business practices, and dedication to positively impacting society and the environment.

“ESG considerations have become increasingly significant across the legal landscape, and your inclusion on the shortlist highlights your exemplary efforts.”

The award highlights the great progress the Firm has made in embedding B Corp™ into the very core of the business and the recognition of our efforts on a national stage, being a role model in our sector and building on the positive impact we can have on the industry.

Our efforts to be a force for good has also seen awards shortlisting in the sustainability category of the Exeter Living Awards and Lexis Nexis Legal Awards.

SUPPORTING OUR B LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Following their involvement in the Cornwall Chamber B23 campaign, sponsored by Wildanet and lead by Leap, which supported a cohort of 23 businesses in Cornwall seeking to become B Corp™, Verity Slater and Laurie Trounce are continuing to inspire and support a further 24 businesses through their B Corp™ application process.

A solicitor in our Corporate team, Jennifer Short-Martin, has been appointed as B Local committee member for Cornwall arranging events for local B Corps and supporting the community.

We have also supported the new B Local community in Devon, having attended the launch of the new B Local group in Exeter at a memorable event at Exeter Cathedral.

In addition, we continue to drive sustainability to the top of the agenda for businesses in the South West by hosting sustainability events, arranging knowledge share sessions and taking part in round table events with leading business publications such as South West Business Insider and The Business Desk.

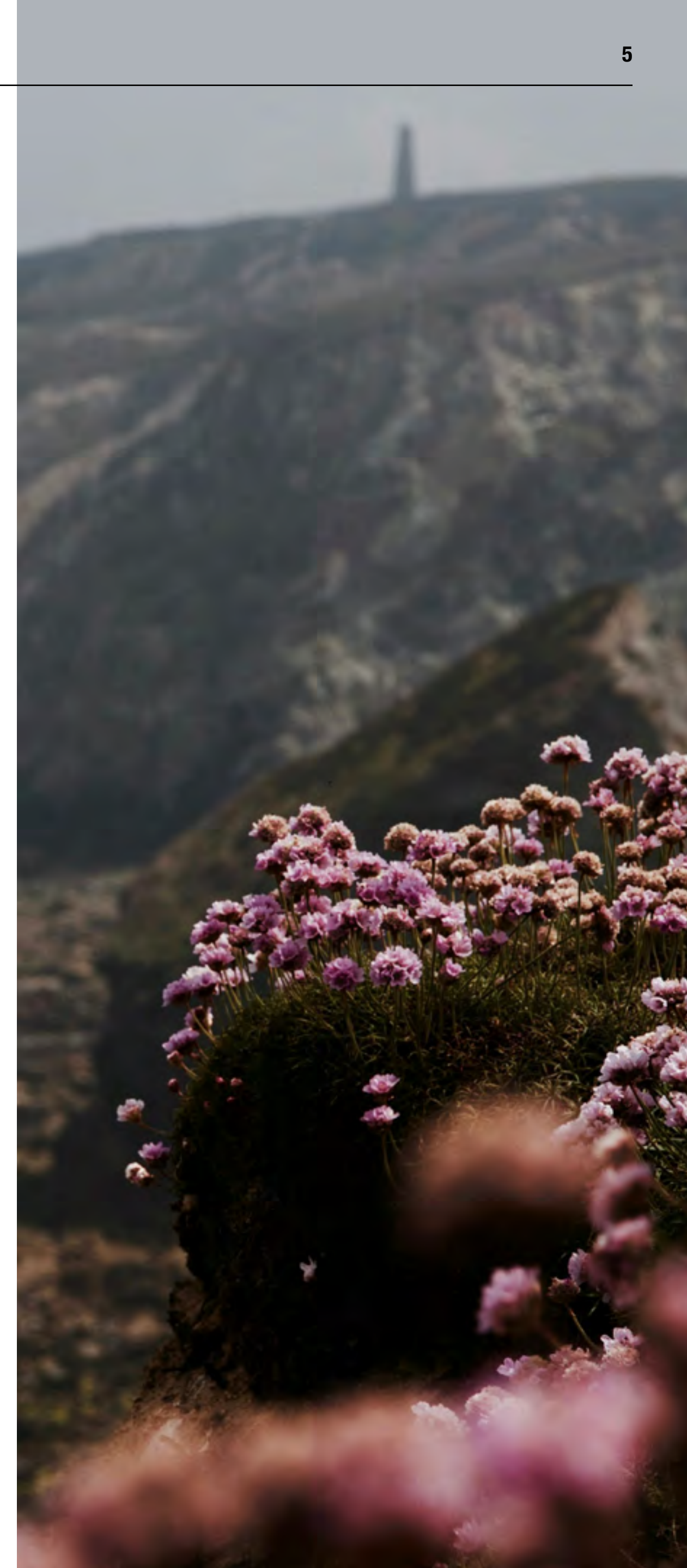
We continue to drive sustainability to the top of the agenda for businesses in the South West.

SUPPORTING CLIENTS WITH THEIR SUSTAINABILITY ASPIRATIONS

Having established that a growing number of clients have ambitions to make a positive impact and wanting to increase our positive impact through the work we offer to clients, we set about creating our B Corp™ Champions group to channel our efforts. This group of engaged individuals from across the spectrum of practice areas and sectors has made a commitment to not only grow awareness and sustainable working practices within their teams, but also increasing their knowledge of how this applies within their work. This knowledge and specialist legal advice is passed on to have a tangible impact and to help clients achieve their sustainability goals, including the key B Corp™ areas of governance, workers, community, the environment and customers.

This activity has also introduced [new web pages](#) and videos about supporting others to build their purpose and impact.

The group also regularly attends and looks for speaking opportunities, which has led to Verity Slater, Laurie Trounce and Lexie Williams speaking at the Cornwall Chamber Planet C event in April 24 on How to Embed Sustainability in Legal Documents – a practical workshop looking at HR policies and practices, protecting values on investment and sale, commercial contracts and in property related documents.





OUR IMPACT ASSESSMENT

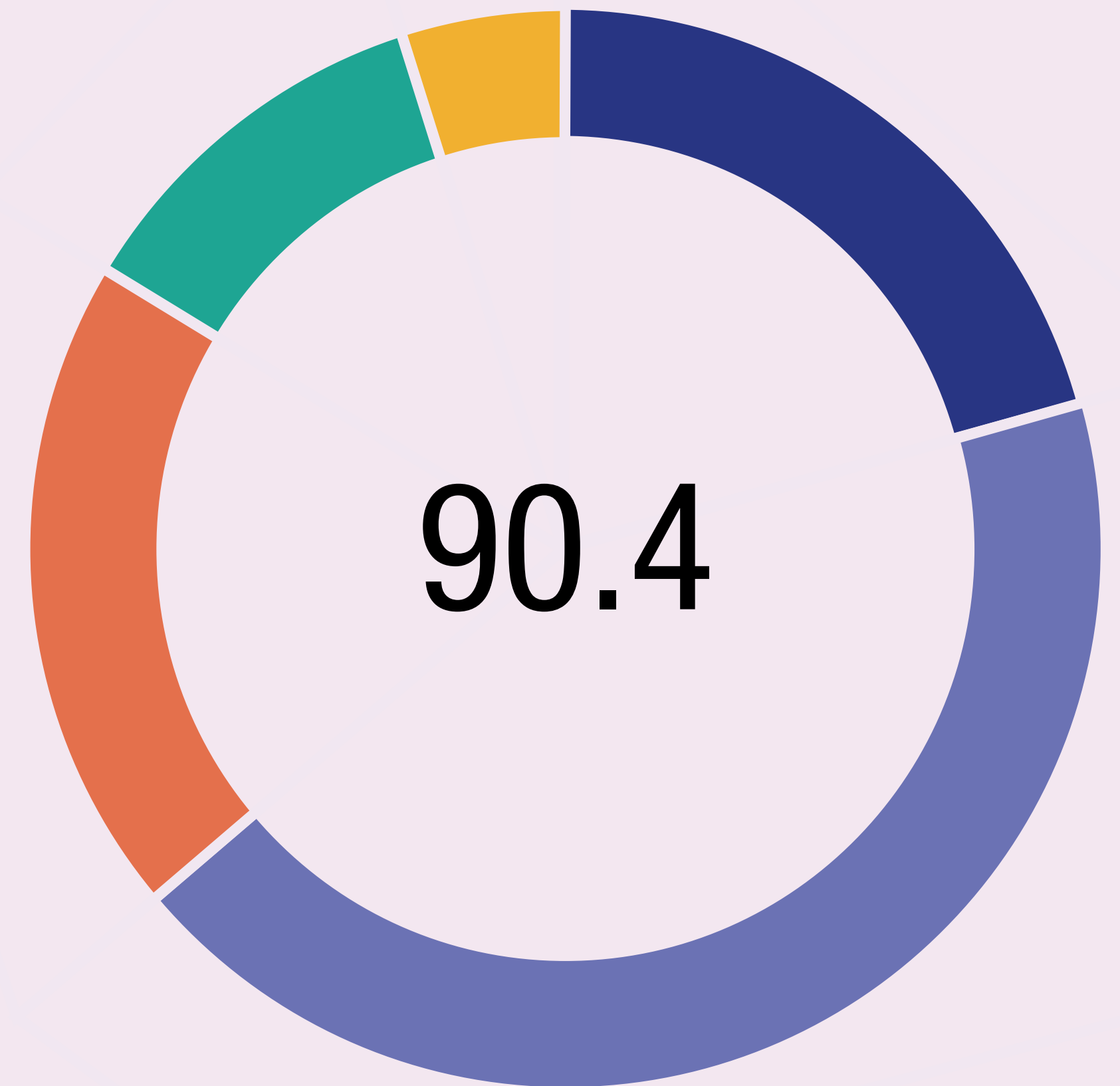
GOVERNANCE	18.7
MISSION AND ENGAGEMENT	1.9
ETHICS AND TRANSPARENCY	6.8
+ MISSION LOCKED	10

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 2024/2025

GOVERNANCE

- Strategy Board to review key performance indicators on the Firm's societal or environmental performance.

OUR PEOPLE

- Plan trial of a Firm wide Sabbatical Program.

COMMUNITY

- Ensure 80% of our facilities have gender neutral or gender inclusive restrooms.
- Set and monitor diversity improvement goals.
- Assess spend on local suppliers – such as how many are within a 50-mile radius of one of our offices.
- Policy Advocacy on social and environmental standards specifically thought leadership on the Better Business Act.
- Sustain volunteering at 25% or above and increase the amount of time spent volunteering by 10%.
- Obtain data on how many of our managers and directors identify as being from an underrepresented social group (ie sexual orientation, age, disabilities, immigration background and/or from low income families that may previously have been underrepresented in law).
- Undertake 10 pro bono projects.

ENVIRONMENT

- Work with Taunton and Exeter Landlord to implement energy efficiency/waste water/waste reduction programmes.
- Track whether conservation or efficiency improvements led to energy savings for our facilities. If so, how much?
- Campaign to reduce the amount of waste produced in the offices: looking at changing both Scowners' and suppliers' behaviours.
- Seek to reduce our Scope 1 and Scope 2 Footprint by a further 10%.
- Screen / evaluate significant suppliers for social and environmental impact: seeking to ascertain and tackle the largest Scope 3 emissions emitted via our supply chain with the specific suppliers.
- Produce a list of Green Hotels for employees to stay in for Exeter, Truro, London and Birmingham.

CLIENTS

- Increase the amount of matters covered by the Service Level Guarantee.
- Get a formal policy in place to review the accuracy and ethics of our marketing and advertising.



GOVERNANCE

18.7



OWNING IT
MATTERS

2023/2024 GOALS

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

All managers received appraisal training last year encouraging the inclusion of social/environmental goals alongside other personal/ commercial objectives. In the last year 69 staff members had specific objectives of this nature in their appraisal. Given this success, this year the form has been altered to more strongly encourage all staff to have a specific objective around this (with a specific box being provided for this in the form) and examples of social and environmental objectives are provided to prompt discussion.

- Board members to complete an annual conflict of interest questionnaire.

Completed and now part of our annual risk and compliance checks.

- External publication on our website of our board of directors for company transparency.

Completed alongside the launch of our new web page for clients/potential clients around how to build their purpose and impact.

2024/2025 GOALS

- Strategy Board to review key performance indicators on the Firm's societal or environmental performance.



Positive work has been done this year to increase our already strong Governance score and to embed through the business the B Corp™ ethos.

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 to be a sounding board for new ideas.

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.

Trustees participate in operational discussions to provide the Board with opinions and guidance from colleagues’ points of view.

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 our values and behaviours and celebrate our collective successes. They also champion Scownership and our colleagues both within and outside the Firm and enhance the flow of information and communication through team ‘parishes’ – where one trustee ‘looks after’ a section of the Firm – usually completely different from their usual work area, attending their meetings and ensuring Scowners are aware of and engaged in Firm matters.

We believe being employee owned is not only great for our employees but that our clients benefit too.

This has been exemplified in this last year by:

- Developing and refining an ideas platform to encourage colleagues to make suggestions for how we could improve. This enables new ideas to be put forward and tested before implementation. For example, we asked colleagues to vote on whether they would support an Electric Vehicle Salary Sacrifice scheme for colleagues. This means employee views can be taken into account on issues that could have significant cost implications or an unequal impact across the Firm (given that this may not be something that lower earners could or would wish to access).
- Another idea that came through the feedback process was the introduction of coffee grounds recycling, which thanks to overwhelming support is now being implemented.
- Launching and celebrating our Firm behaviours. They have hosted fun events to bring these to life and encouraged the use of our positive postcards to celebrate colleagues showing these values. It has been particularly great to have these called out and celebrated by the Trustees at our Away Day and quarterly business updates.
- Parish trustees going above and beyond to celebrate and support the teams they work with: celebrating great performances and sharing best practice across the Firm.
- Dave Robbins (one of our Trustees and an Associate Corporate lawyer) stepping in to present the financial element of the quarterly business update when the Finance Director was not able to: helping all staff understand our budgets, targets and goals.

In addition, Trustees 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.

Sam Moles, one of our Trustees, was nationally recognised this year by being awarded the Employee Owner of the Year at the UK Employee Ownership Awards. This recognised his great work as a Trustee and as an ambassador for EO.

We also have a Partners’ Council that links into the Board via the Chairman, Bill Wilkins.



OUR SCOWNERSHIP TRUSTEES



OUR PEOPLE



OWNING IT MATTERS

2023/2024 GOALS

- Improve the green credentials of our pension.

Over the course of last year, we have been undertaking extensive research into what would be best for our people's retirement savings. We used the very helpful information from the Green Pensions Guide (from Make My Money Matter) and undertook due diligence, also paying careful attention to the relevant criteria governed by the Pensions Regulator. We raised questions with the providers around ethical investment in terms of the scheme itself and the provider's own commitment to ESG.

From April 2024 we have moved our auto-enrolment pension to Royal London. As a mutual company we saw real synergy and values alignment with our own Employee-Owned status. We also were impressed with their sustainable fund range and the extent to which ESG factors were included in investment decisions. All qualifying employees can now access pensions within the sustainable fund range.

As part of our roll out of the new pension provision, we spoke to employees about the power of 'where their monies spend the night' and the significant impact of sustainable pensions and investments.

- Ensuring annual employee satisfaction survey and ensuring good data on satisfaction.

In March 2024 we undertook our most recent external employee satisfaction survey in conjunction with the Sunday Times, in which we achieved a very healthy response rate of 76% and an excellent overall engagement score of 83%, which enabled us to become one of only 92 organisations in our 'big' sized category to be listed as a Sunday Times Best Places to Work 2024. We were the only law firm in the South West to be listed.

Our engagement score of 83% outstripped the global average engagement score of 76% and the industry (legal services) average engagement score of 71%.

Our highest scoring questions were:

- 90% - My company treats environmental sustainability as a priority
- 89% - I have a good relationship with my manager

We achieved a very low flight risk score (13% against a global and industry average of 41%) and a very good score for the wellbeing of our colleagues.

This reflects the most recent data on attrition rates and sickness absence levels which are reported to our board on a monthly basis. Our May 2024 attrition rates have fallen to the lowest they have been in three years, exceeding our target, and our sickness absence rates remain at a very low level.

We will now use the data to deep dive, seek feedback from our colleagues, and make recommendations to continually improve, build, and shape our employee experience leading to greater employee satisfaction.

2024/2025 GOALS

- Plan trial of a Firm wide Sabbatical Program.



OUR VALUES

We know from our Scowners that at Stephens Scown, #OwningItMatters, #BeingGreatMatters, #DoingGoodMatters and #HavingFunMatters. This was established from our Employee Values Proposition #ItMatters initiative to promote a positive culture through a happy and stimulating work environment where our colleagues feel emotionally connected to each other and the business.



BEING GREAT MATTERS

We go beyond expectations, helping our clients achieve great things matters.



DOING GOOD MATTERS

We are B Corp™ Certified, because balancing people, planet and profit matters.



OWNING IT MATTERS

We are employee-owned, because empowering our people matters.



HAVING FUN MATTERS

We make the most of every day, because a life enriched by work matters.

This year we identified and launched five specific behaviours as the core positive attributes that are consistently referenced by Scowners in making Stephens Scown the unique place it is.

These underpin our values and help establish what it means to be a Scowner. They also help us understand what behaviours are expected from all colleagues.

The behaviours are:



Whatever the challenge we pitch in together, supporting shared goals to feed into the wider success of our Firm.



We lead by example because what we do and how we do it, matters.



We take the initiative and drive excellence in everything we do.



We speak with confidence and listen with care.



We allow all voices to be heard and give others the opportunity to shine.

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

Throughout this year we have held a campaign to engage with these behaviours, led by our Trustees. This has included championing those within the Firm showing these behaviours, holding ‘behaviour-themed drinks’ to arrange fun ways to look at and celebrate these – such as a treasure hunt, team quizzes and activities. Accolades around this were given at our Away Day and at our face-to-face quarterly business updates – so colleagues can see and hear how others’ actions have had a really positive impact.

We also looked at leadership through this lens at our Partner Conference, weighing up the traits of famous leaders such as Jacinda Arden and Elon Musk. This has really brought these behaviours to life, been a lot of fun and helped everyone understand the part they can play in the success of our Firm.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

As well as improving our pension provision, further successes this year have included enhancing the maternity and paternity benefits given to our Scowners and increasing the recruitment referral bonus.

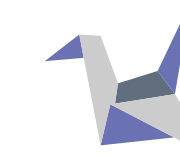
Our goal this year is to plan a trial of a firm wide sabbatical program to support our Scowners’ wellbeing, creativity and personal development. This will enable Scowners to have between four to eight weeks paid leave plus a Sabbatical bonus, if they choose to undertake charity or volunteering while on Sabbatical or travel without flying. This is being planned on a trial basis so we can check the proposed criteria works and how it impacts capacity in our teams.



We also continue to be committed to the Living Wage Foundation principles and support our Scowners with a wide range of 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



Equal Profit Share Payment

Being employee-owned means that all employees of the Firm regardless of status, benefit from equal profit share payment, which is paid annually.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Through our clear Promotion & Progression 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.

We have a successful Mentoring Programme with 27 mentors across the Firm. Our Mentoring Programme is open to everyone and is an opportunity for our mentors to share their skills, knowledge and experience to support the development of their mentee, and to help them achieve successful career and life goals. Our effective mentoring relationships foster learning opportunities for both the mentor and mentee, encouraging sharing and learning across the Firm.

Training resources are easily available to all colleagues with a wide range of experience, and delivery methods accommodating for various preferences and learning styles. 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 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 quarterly 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.

We also have a training team that consists of Partners and Associates from a range of different backgrounds and legal teams who oversee the training journey. They meet monthly 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.



COMMUNITY



DOING GOOD MATTERS

2023/2024 GOALS

 **Set diversity improvement goals regularly reviewed by the Board after EDI survey.**

We have an active and live ED&I plan in place that is informed by data and feedback, and regularly reviewed by our Board. This includes a dashboard to compare diversity data as we obtain it. At present we don't have specific percentages we wish to improve by, rather specific measurable improvement goals based on activities. This is under review which is why this goal has rolled over to this year.

Continuing to build a culture that positively promotes Equality Diversity & Inclusion is really important and forms an integral part of our Scowner Experience Strategic Pillar.

We have taken further strides to enable positive change this year, including:

- a focus around women's health, including providing free sanitary products in restrooms and emphasising the support available around menopause;
- encouraging greater female representation at senior level through review of our promotion criteria and clarification for maternity returners;
- the introduction of our "inclusive thinker" behaviour, embedded throughout our employee journey from induction to appraisal;
- improvements to our recruitment process to encourage applicants from all backgrounds and to increase social mobility; and
- the review and revamp of our external and internal websites to ensure more inclusive language and images.

The number of women on our Board remains over 50%.

Our Gender Pay Gap is reported annually, ensuring staff are aware of our progress and details are shared openly. The current report is [here](#). Our gender pay gap is falling and we are paying men and women equally for similar jobs across all levels.

From this year's Sunday Times Best Places to Work Survey, 79% of our Scowners said 'my company cares about diversity and inclusion' and our overall diversity and inclusion score was 'Excellent'. This is reassuring that our work in this regard is having a positive impact.

 **Get increased engagement with the EDI survey so we have accurate data on this – much of our stats on this at present are 'don't know'.**

We undertook a campaign internally to encourage our colleagues to complete the Solicitors Regulatory Authority diversity survey in 2023, explaining why this was important to us. We were delighted to have a 58% response rate, which was a 48% increase from the survey in 2021.

Although we only have two years of data to compare, it shows a promising trend in improvements to our Firm diversity and social mobility. We also have a much clearer picture of the overall diversity of the Firm.


This year's Sunday Times Best Places to Work Survey has also given diversity data against each question – so we have been able to review whether any demographic feels more or less strongly about the question asked. No persons with diversity characteristics feel more or less strongly on specific issues than others, which is very reassuring.

 **Increase the number of employees that do volunteering to 25% or above.**

In this Financial Year 23/24, 25.90% of the full-time employees in the Firm undertook paid volunteer leave. This was 72 members of staff. This is how B Corp™ measures this data.

When we looked at data for the whole staff group (including part time colleagues), 83 Scowners undertook paid volunteer leave which was 24.27%.

This was a big increase from 49 colleagues volunteering in the year before.

 **Better tracking of the amount of time spent volunteering to see if we can increase to 1-2.4% of time.**


We recorded 413 hours of volunteering this year – the equivalent of 57 days. This is up from 367.90 hours last year.

When you compare that to the number of hours all our full-time colleagues work in a year, this is only 0.085%. Although the tracking is now in better shape, we have quite a way to go before our people are volunteering for 1% of their time. This will need to be a longer-term ambition.

 **(in part) Screen / evaluate significant suppliers for social and environmental impact.**

We have contacted our main suppliers and asked them specific questions around their carbon footprint and social impact. This had mixed results but opened up good discussions around our B Corp™ status. Moving forward we are taking more proactive decisions around who we choose to work with and why, applying our procurement policy proactively.

We continue to encourage local purchasing and events we hold are catered by local providers on the basis of 50% vegetarian/vegan.

 **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.**

Met – projects below.

2024/2025 GOALS

- Ensure 80% of our facilities have gender neutral or gender inclusive restrooms.

- Set and monitor diversity improvement goals.

- Assess spend on local suppliers – such as how many are within a 50-mile radius of one of our offices.

- Policy Advocacy on social and environmental standards specifically thought leadership on the Better Business Act.

- Sustain volunteering at 25% or above and increase the amount of time spent volunteering by 10%.

- Obtain data on how many of our managers and directors identify as being from an underrepresented social group (ie sexual orientation, age, disabilities, immigration background and/or from low income families that may previously have been underrepresented in law).

- Undertake 10 pro bono projects.



CHARITABLE GIVING (A GIVING BACK PILLAR)

Overall our Firm Charitable Giving over the last financial year was £14,186.

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

In this period the Charity Committee raised £6,267.30 for our three Firm charities who this year were:



These charities are voted for every two years by our colleagues.

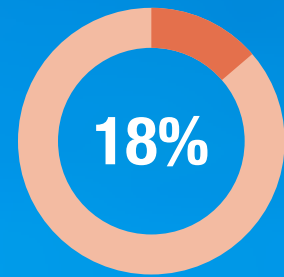
Events run by the Charity Committee this year included the excellent Christmas Auction, unwanted Christmas gift raffle, bake sales, pancake and ice cream days, a ping pong championship and of course the usual tuck shop.

To increase awareness, representatives from the Firm charities have presented to Scowners at our offices to explain how the funds make a massive difference to the people they are supporting. In February, our Exeter colleagues learned about Balloons Charity from CEO Nicola Clarke, and all the amazing work they do supporting bereaved children and young people across Exeter, East and Mid Devon. Then in March, Amanda Masters, Area Fundraiser for Children's Hospice South West visited our Truro office to talk about volunteering opportunities.

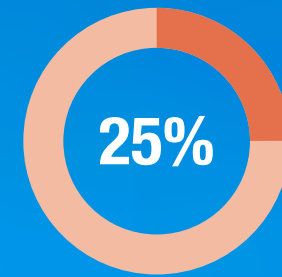
In addition to firmwide and office fundraising campaigns, colleagues receive up to £100 as a donation from the Firm for their personal fundraising efforts for the charities close to their hearts. Examples of the great fundraising this year included a number of Scowners swimming in the Taunton Swimathon, Movember, sleeping rough in the biomes at the Eden project to support a homeless charity, plus various cycling and walking challenges.

A charitable donation was given to our Firmwide charity this year to celebrate our Scowners' long service at our away day – alongside giving them a personal gift as well. With a further £1,265 raised for Dementia UK, with a donation made for each submission to the Sunday Times Best Places to Work survey.





2022/23



2023/24

The number of employees in the Firm that undertook paid volunteer leave.



VOLUNTEERING (A GIVING BACK PILLAR)

Colleagues across the Firm are involved in many charitable and community organisations inside and outside of work. Currently our Scowners hold 54 appointed roles in those organisations, including acting as School Governors, Trustees and national representatives – within organisations as diverse as Community Stores, Sea Scouts, Sports clubs and Hospices.

We are keen to encourage employees to be involved in the community that they live in. Scowners have three days’ paid volunteer leave to do so, can get involved in team or firm volunteering or alter their hours to undertake voluntary work more easily in their free time.

In our financial year 22/23 we logged 367.90 hours on our time recording system as being used for CSR and Charity Work. This is only recorded by our legal advisors during their usual working day. In this financial year, this decreased to 201.4 hours. We are exploring why, given that volunteering and pro bono work increased.

In our 22/23 Financial Year, the number of employees in the Firm that undertook paid volunteer leave 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.

This year, the total number of full-time employees that undertook paid volunteer leave was 72 – 25.90% of our full-time staff. The total number of Scowners who actually did volunteering was 83.

This was a good increase from the year before and our efforts to track this has improved engagement.

The total number of hours spent that we have recorded as being volunteer time was 413 hours. This is still a very small percentage of the total time we work and one to consider.

We’ve again seen a continuing trend in teams choosing to volunteer together – at away days or team socials. This is positive as it shows this behaviour continues to be embedded in our Firm culture – and our teams have had great fun with this!



Baking cakes for YMCA Exeter cake bank

The Commercial Dispute Resolution Team baked cakes for Exeter YMCA, which runs a cake bank – where the cake is sold or given away to those in need.



Teams unite for beach cleans across the South West

Beach cleans have been all the rage! The Corporate and Commercial Team organised a beach clean at Watergate Bay, with the Property Litigation Team also enjoying a great beach clean day at Perranporth. The IPDP team cleaned up Exmouth beach as part of their team effort.



Harvesting hope at the Amber Foundation

Members of our church and property teams volunteered at the Amber Foundation – which provides housing and homeless support for young adults – helping with apple harvesting and juicing.





Gardening for the Little Harbour Hospice's Sensory Garden

Our Planning team supported the Little Harbour Hospice with weeding beds in their sensory garden.



Clearing the path for Magic Carpet charity's merger

In March, Communications Manager Natalie Vizard supported Magic Carpet, an Exeter-based charity she has been a Trustee of since 2019, with a big office clear out in preparation for merging with another local charity.



Active Scowners in action, volunteering in outdoor activities

Our Scowners like to keep active by volunteering in various outdoors activities such as planting trees, bucket collections, helping with pop-up stalls and supporting garden shows!



Supporting the local communities across Cornwall

Board member, Verity Slater, used a volunteer day to support Emmanuel Baptist Church in Falmouth by taking children to a Christian Summer Camp. Verity also used days to support Cornwall Community Foundation – where she is a Trustee and chairs their HR Committee using her expertise as an Employment lawyer.



Leading with care on the Jumbulance Trust ski trip

In January, our Client Services Assistant, Anne-Marie Murray-Abbott, volunteered with the Jumbulance Trust as a group leader on a ski trip where she was 'on call' for the duration of the trip, ensuring that the travellers were safe during the trip. The Jumbulance Trust followed up by stating that Anne-Marie threw herself into 'helping everyone, keeping spirits up and making endless cups of tea on the long overnight journey to Austria. Our ski trip would not have been the same without her!'.



Inspiring the future with Young Enterprise and Pathways to Law

Board member Catherine Mathews, volunteered with Young Enterprise, helping out with the Young Enterprise Company Finals by assisting with the organisation and looking after the judges, who are all prominent local business people. The event was filmed by Spotlight! Catherine also used volunteer time this year to give a keynote speech at Pathways to Law, arranged by the Sutton Trust to inspire and support work experience and careers in law whatever your background.



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. 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). See this year's projects below.

The Firm also undertakes Legal Aid work for individuals in the family sphere – which provides them with free legal advice. This particularly supports those who have suffered domestic violence and represents children, particularly those who are subject to care proceedings. We strongly believe that in doing this work we are supporting those most vulnerable in our community: this also has a commercial impact for us given the remuneration received by the Legal Aid Agency is around a quarter of the usual rates.



Whole Again Communities

Simone Kloos-Parris said: *“We are a small social enterprise operating from one of the most deprived estates in England, in Penzance. A recent, unfortunate encounter with a rogue trader resulted in us having to use up our already moderate reserves to be able to continue to serve our community.*

“We were considering going public with our story but were wary of potential consequences in terms of defamation/ slander/libel, and therefore sought and received very helpful and concise pro-bono advice from Laura Stanley of Stephens Scown.

“Thanks to the advice received we are now more confident and optimistic that we will be able to recover some of the unexpected damage done.”



Laura Stanley



Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (Somerset County Council)

We were asked to draft representations in respect of an application under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP). The principal applicant worked alongside British special forces in Afghanistan.

The family were evacuated urgently when the Taliban took control of the country in 2021 and relocated to the UK. The two eldest sons were studying abroad at the time of the takeover and so were not resettled. The application was made to allow the sons to relocate and prevent them being forcibly returned to Afghanistan.

Somerset County Council said the following about the advice given: *“Among the ARAP and ACRS clients that are supported within the Displaced People Service, we see an increasing need for high quality, bespoke immigration advice. For clients seeking information about family members who may be in peril overseas, the inability to access this advice represents a huge barrier to them being able to settle and integrate into their local area.*

“The support provided to this family has ensured that the family’s voice has been properly heard and therefore improved their trust and confidence in UK systems.”



Lisa Mulholland



Abigail Grace

Teams are encouraged to undertake pro bono work for charities or Community Interest Companies.



Cornwall Community Foundation

Chris Morse and Tom Laws from our Employment Team supported Cornwall Community Foundation in preparing an agreement for a Project Co-ordinator. This role was introduced to support a new STEM award scheme to support the next generation of Cornwall-based STEM thinkers and to work on the Young and Talented Cornwall project: helping talented young people of Cornwall fulfil their ambition.

As an organisation CCF helps people across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly by awarding small grants to grassroots organisations who are working to overcome the challenges of disadvantage, exclusion and poverty in their communities.



Chris Morse



Tom Laws

Dark Skies Cornwall

We assisted with the creation of a new CIC called Dark Skies Cornwall which aims to promote the designated dark sky areas in Cornwall (Bodmin and West Penwith) and the Isles of Scilly. The work involved preparing Articles of Association for CIC, drafting the CIC36 setting out the activities and submitting the incorporation to Companies House.



Olivia Miller



Charles Oliver



Skate Molton CIC

Advice was given to this Community Project in relation to a right of way dispute with their new skate park. The other side in the dispute used an international law firm and took a very heavy handed approach. The project was a joint venture with South Molton Town Council.

The head of the CIC said this: *"Thank you so much for all your help with this situation, and what a letter! It is absolutely amazing and very thorough."*

"Thank you also for highlighting the "bully boy" behaviour towards Skate Molton C.I.C and how this is unacceptable behaviour. Thank you for standing up for us."



Richard Bagwell



Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust are delighted to work with Stephens Scown LLP on a number of projects. The Trust relies on donations and grants to undertake crucial conservation work and is therefore limited to what can be achieved.

Tim has recently completed pro-bono work for a site which was gifted to the Wildlife Trust. This was hugely appreciated as general funds which would have paid legal fees can now be used to enhance the site and to protect the precious chalkstream which was included in the gift.



Tim Atkins



St Mawgan Surf Life Saving Club

We are providing assistance to draft and register a lease of land upon which the surf life saving club plans to site their clubhouse and storage unit. A local resident has indicated that they will probably gift the right to locate the building on her land and we were therefore asked to deal with the transaction as efficiently as possible.



Ben Wheeler



Falmouth University

Tim Lane and Emily Smith have been giving advice and guidance to 2nd year students at Falmouth Uni on their Sustainable Product Design degree course. Work done by the Corporate and IP/DP teams.

"We are so grateful for the support that Stephens Scown have provided to our students over the past few years. On the BA(Hons) Sustainable Product Design course, students learn about new product development within the context of environmental, social, and economic sustainability."

"Through engaging workshops, Stephens Scown, have introduced 2nd year students to critical issues relating to business, entrepreneurship, and design. This has included an introduction to business structures, and the meaning of IP and how to protect it."

"The students have benefited considerably from these workshops by expanding their understanding of professional practice and developing their employability skills."



Tim Lane



Emily Smith

CHARITABLE SPONSORSHIPS

These partnerships are more than just financial contributions; they reflect our dedication to fostering positive change in the communities we serve. By aligning our resources with causes that resonate with our values, we strive to create meaningful impacts that extend beyond our business operations, helping to build a more inclusive and sustainable world.



Sponsorship of The Dive Project

A client of Verity Slater, Partner and member of the Giving Back team, Dive Project Cornwall's work is to challenge and empower young people, through the process of learning to scuba dive, to become more resilient day-to-day; taking important life-skills from the Project and continue to thrive in their own lives. Providing a life-changing opportunity to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people throughout the UK, our sponsorship helps the work to continue and to further help raise awareness of this brilliant local community interest company.



Sponsorship of Phoenix Heart Awards

Phoenix Learning and Care works with children and young adults giving opportunities for life and living, a real sense of achievement and a pathway to an independent future. The Phoenix HEART Awards is their annual event to recognise and honour the remarkable achievements of their Team Members in bringing the values of Nurture – Flourish – Grow to life. As one of the key sponsors, we were able to help shine a light on the fantastic work being done and to celebrate with those in attendance and the evening's prize winners.



Sponsorship of Edward Hain Centre opening event

Having helped residents with their efforts to maintain The Edward Hain Centre as a community hub for health and wellbeing in St. Ives, its mission to provide accessible health and wellbeing services to the people of St. Ives and surrounding communities continues apace. Providing the legal work to save the building from being turned into holiday homes, we were proud to sponsor their launch event. The building is now maintained for community use where, with a holistic approach, they aim to bring traditional medical and clinical services as well as a wider choice of preventive care to enhance overall health and wellbeing.



Positive Nature Network: 'People Planet Pint'

Positive Planet Certified is a credible independent accreditation for responsible brands that recognises ongoing achievements in sustainability. Sponsoring a litter pick and talk, the event brought local businesses together to clear rubbish from a local riverside path, and to raise awareness of the work being done by the organisation. More than 500 businesses and not-for-profit organisations, across a variety of industries, trust Positive Planet as their partner to deliver a low-carbon future and we're pleased to play a small part in its success.

ENVIRONMENT



2023/2024 GOALS

- 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.

Unfortunately, this has not been possible, however as we seek to move from shared office space to our permanent home in Taunton we will be looking to install EV charge points and solar panels.

- 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.

We have worked with the University of Exeter to verify our footprint and to prepare our decarbonisation plan.

- Prepare a detailed plan on further reducing our Carbon Footprint and share with the Firm on our half yearly Net Zero updates.

Six-monthly reports have been submitted to the Board and shared with colleagues, which ensures transparency and accountability for our actions in this regard.

- Reduce our Scope 1 and Scope 2 carbon footprint by at least 2.5%.

Our Scope 1 and Scope 2 Footprint (including the same categories as last year) actually increased by 9%. This has been due to the opening of the Taunton Office and increased use of business travel.

Our overall Carbon Footprint (Scope 1, 2 and 3) reduced by around 0.5% compared to the year before.

- Produce a list of green hotels for employees to stay in for Exeter, Truro, London and Birmingham.

This has been harder than we thought as there appears to be little data readily available in this regard. We still need to finalise our work on this, so as to be certain the hotels we are recommending are suitable.

- Review the Firm's cloud storage company and their carbon reduction plan.

We undertook this task and the result is that we are moving suppliers in July 2024, to a new company which is part of the group that supplies our stationery, who have strong environmental credentials. This was a significant factor in the decision to move.

2024/2025 GOALS

- Work with Taunton and Exeter Landlord to implement energy efficiency/waste water/waste reduction programmes.

- Track whether conservation or efficiency improvements led to energy savings for our facilities. If so, how much?

- Campaign to reduce the amount of waste produced in the offices: looking at changing both Scowners' and suppliers' behaviours.

- Seek to reduce our Scope 1 and Scope 2 Footprint by a further 10%.

- Screen / evaluate significant suppliers for social and environmental impact: seeking to ascertain and tackle the largest Scope 3 emissions emitted via our supply chain with the specific suppliers.

- Produce a list of Green Hotels for employees to stay in for Exeter, Truro, London and Birmingham.



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.

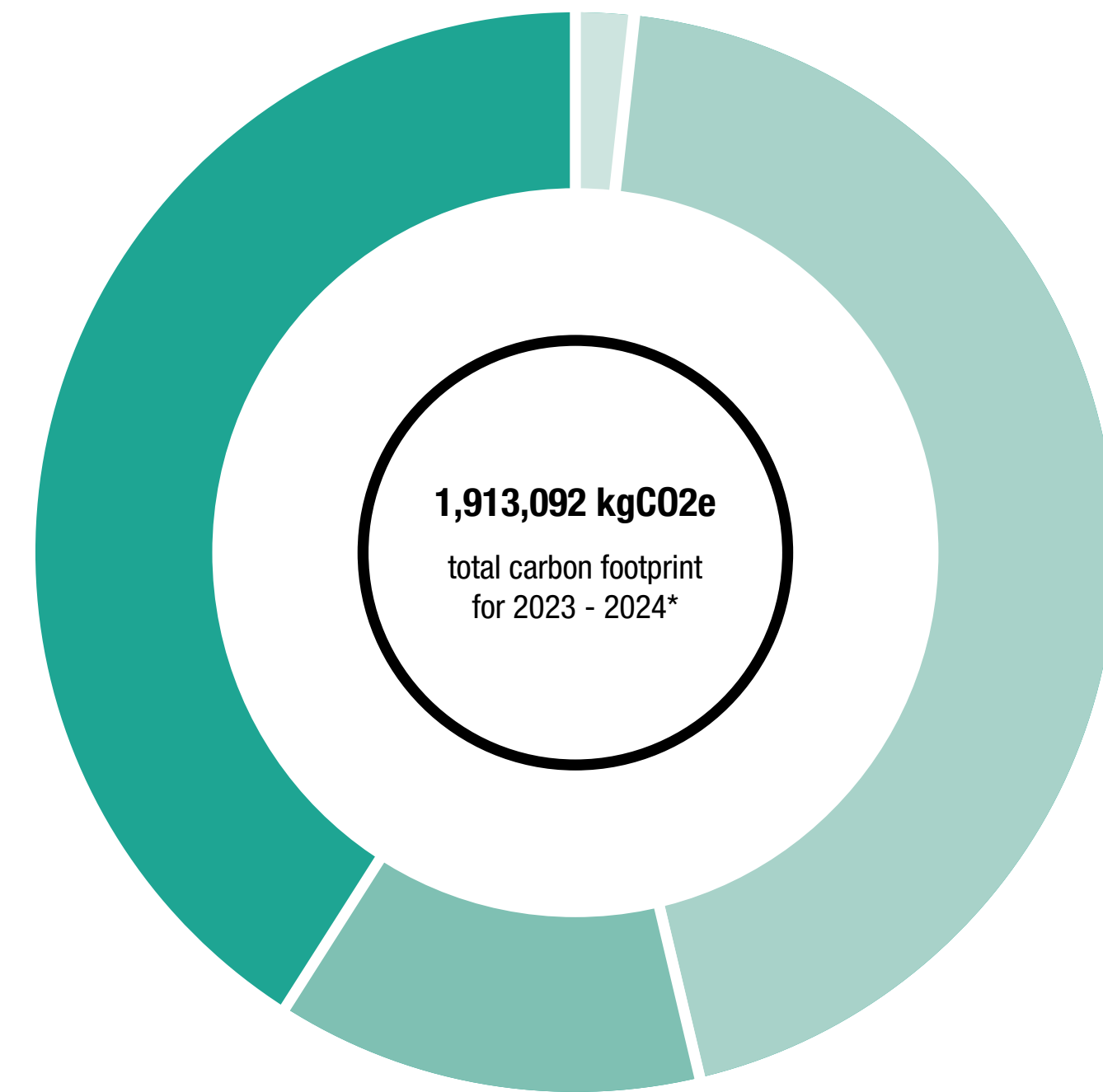
One of our core values is seeking to be sustainable and to do things efficiently and without waste. We want to leave behind a world that the next generation can enjoy.

When we evaluate our carbon footprint using the parameters we have used since 2019-20, our Carbon Footprint for this year is 47,041 kgCO₂e. This is Scope 1 and Scope 2 and some of Scope 3 (business travel).

This is a 9% increase from last year. This is still 46% less than pre-pandemic (2020/21). This has been due to the opening of the Taunton Office, improved IT infrastructure and increased use of business travel – which has increased by 10% from the year before.

The verified results from our 2022-23 carbon report were the Firm’s most comprehensive yet, with data recorded and published across Scopes 1, 2 and 3, and independently checked and verified by Chris Philips at Exeter University.

The results for 2023-24 have also been verified and our 2023-24 carbon footprint was 1,937,391 kgCO₂e. This accounts for all aspects including accommodation, waste, staff commuting plus our suppliers and services. This is an increase of 0.8% on the full carbon footprint for 2022-23 which was 1,921,419 kgCO₂e, mainly due an increase in costs affecting the spend based formulas used to calculate our Scope 3 emissions.



	kg CO ₂ e	KWH
Waste	43.5%	66.0%
Staff Commuting	13.5%	20.0%
Suppliers and Services	40.5%	4.0%
Business Travel	2.0%	2.7%
Gas	0.3%	1.9%
Electricity	0.1%	5.3%
Water	0.0%	0.0%
Accommodation	0.1%	0.1%
F-Gas	0.0%	0.0%

*Estimated figure based on 2022-23 data. Final verified figure for 2023-24 due shortly.



Scope 1

The emissions produced in this Scope are from our use of gas to heat our premises and provide hot water. We currently offset our carbon emissions through our procurement with only High Water House contributing to our carbon emissions. Overall, our actual use of gas has reduced compared to last year.

The refurbishment of Curzon House this year will see the decommissioning of the gas boilers and installation of an air source heat pump to provide hot water around the building. Combined with the installation of a new more efficient hot water boiler in Osprey House and gas being obsolete in Taunton, our use of gas will dramatically decrease.



Scope 2

Our use of electricity is fundamental to the running of our Firm. Apart from the electricity procured at Block in Taunton all of it consumed is produced by renewable sources. Our actual use of electric is lower compared to last year, due to the introduction of laptops to all staff, as they use less power than desk top computers, and the closure of our St Austell branch.

As the Firm continues to expand, I would expect our energy usage to increase especially with the introduction of the air source heat pump in Exeter and the removal of the gas supply. However, an introduction of a desk booking app might allow better use of the facilities and thus add extra efficiencies such as a reduction in lighting and heating.



Scope 3

This section will break down the various categories in this section and will look to explain the trends and management of each moving forward.



Business Travel

Although still circa 50% less pre pandemic levels, the level of business travel has continued to increase year on year with a circa 10% increase since last year. This is mainly due to several factors: the continuing opening up of society since the pandemic and the introduction of the Firm's policy of 'One Firm' that has seen a steady increase of Scowner travel between offices. Travel by car is up 7% with 85% of all journeys taken by car, with train travel down by 8%. Some of this can be explained by train strikes and inconsistent service, however the increased use of car travel is troubling. Ideally the Firm's travel policy needs to be reassessed and re-communicated.

The introduction of electric pool cars combined with a scheme for purchasing electric vehicles via salary sacrifice has the potential to reverse the trend.



Accommodation

Although emissions attributed to accommodation has increased it has remained relatively stable. Ultimately, we should look to book with hotels that have strong environmental credentials and sustainability at the core of their business plan.



Waste

Waste is the major contributor to our carbon emissions. Over the last couple of years this has been attributed to the Firm wide introduction of new IT equipment; the clearance of our offices and storage in St Austell; decluttering in Exeter and Truro; and better recording of the waste we produce. Due to the upcoming refurbishment of Curzon House and works planned in Taunton and Truro I suspect the current results to remain consistent during 2024-25 with a significant reduction in 2025-26.



Staff Commuting

Staff commuting and working from home accounts for almost a quarter of our carbon emissions. There is a need to explore incentives and introduce measures that encourage the use of public transport, cycling, walking, and car sharing that discourage the single use of petrol and diesel vehicles. Whilst the introduction of the travel plan has produced positive results it does require a refresh and developing to help reduce our emissions.



Suppliers and Services

The carbon emissions from this section are calculated using a spend based formula. Due to inflation the cost of services has risen by circa 5-10% across the board. This has ultimately had a significant impact on our Co2e calculation. However, as the figure has only increased by 3% this would suggest that our carbon emissions are decreasing compared to last year. Several suppliers do calculate and provide our specific emissions produced for using their services and the number of suppliers able to provide this information will continue to increase. This will provide greater accuracy of data and potentially a reduction in the figures for the total amount of emissions. The introduction of this provision for all future contracts should become mandatory moving forward.

The remainder predominantly relates to colleague behaviour: we continue to seek to educate and encourage sustainable actions. As part of our one-year anniversary celebration of being a Certified B Corp™, members of our Giving Back team delivered talks in January 2024 to colleagues about carbon literacy, how to reduce their carbon footprint and live more sustainably.

Our goals this year are more specific to reduce our carbon impact to ensure we are on track to achieve our Net Zero by the end of 2025 goal. We are also reviewing and establishing what is appropriate by way of carbon offsetting, working with consultants Carbon Sense Ltd.



CLIENTS

4.3



BEING GREAT
MATTERS

2024/2025 GOALS

Increase the amount of matters covered by the Service Level Guarantee.

Get a formal policy in place to review the accuracy and ethics of our marketing and advertising.



CLIENT LISTENING

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, which helps 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 external Client Experience Consultant, which ensures the client feels more comfortable giving feedback than they would directly to a member of the Firm. These reviews provide 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.



REPORTING AND BEST PRACTICE

Using the survey results, Client Experience (CX) Reports are provided to team leaders monthly, which includes the NPS score for their area of the business (net promoter score – a widely used marketing metric used to measure customer loyalty) and verbatim client feedback for reflection/action.

In addition, this year we held a series of CX Evolved sessions with four key areas of the Firm, prompting teams to consider how to exceed client expectations, how to spot learning opportunities, managing client expectations and process changes to support this.

We hold ‘CX Lunch & Learn’ sessions across our offices, to help maintain our focus in this area and exchange best practice internally.

To ensure our service delivery is of a consistently high quality, we also use a third party to carry out mystery shopping. The same scenarios and scoring system are also used with our competitors. We analyse the results and work closely with our teams to continually assess and improve levels of service.

SYSTEMS & PROCESSES

We are now in our second year of using our bespoke, custom-built 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.

AWARDS

In the last 12 months we have celebrated many successes, the following awards have all recognised our Client Experience process and results:



Cornwall Law Society Awards
Best Large Law Firm of the Year - Winner



Lexis Nexis Family Law Awards
Legal Support of the Year - Finalist



Business Masters Awards
Professional Services – Regional - Finalist



Modern Law Awards
Client Care Award – Finalist



Exeter Living Awards
Legal Services – Winner



Lexis Nexis Legal Awards
Customer Focus – Finalist
In addition, a deal we worked on won Deal of the Year



Cornwall Chamber 30 under 30
Kensa Jewell – Winner
Tamsin Best – Winner
Tyler Richards – Shortlisted



Legal 500 ESG Awards
Environmental/Sustainability Private Practice Champion of the Year (internal) Verity Slater - Finalist



Exeter Tomorrow 30 under 30
Kia Pearson - Winner



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.

This has seen one of our solicitors praised for her innovative approach to supporting clients. Regularly going the extra mile, Megan Eaton, who works in our Family Children team, managed to secure a place in a refuge on Christmas Eve for a client who was a domestic abuse victim. She has also assisted in securing a placement for a client and her child when it did not form part of the Local Authority’s care plan and had not previously been attempted. Her efforts were successful due to the placement being a perfect fit for the client’s needs for assessment, which drew commendation by the Guardian who stated that without Megan’s efforts, it would not have happened.

Jade Kent from our Corporate team is continuing in her role as 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. The healthcare sector team at Stephens Scown is also proud to support the annual awards ceremony hosted by client Phoenix Learning & Care to recognise and honour the remarkable achievements of their people, who work with children and young adults giving opportunities for life and living, a real sense of achievement and a pathway to an independent future.

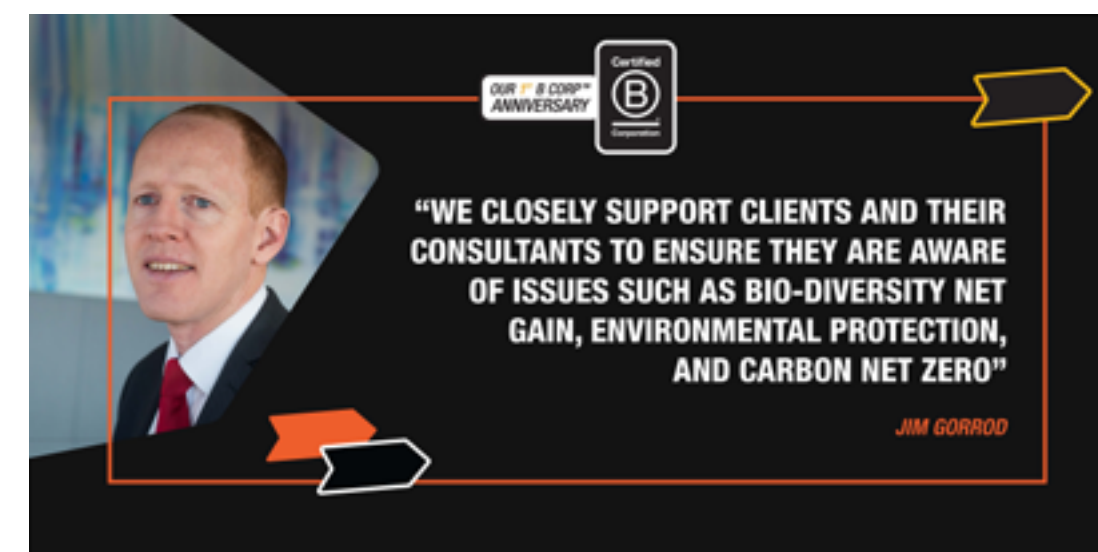
Our Employment team promote B Corp™ values through running regular Ethical HR Breakfast events, meeting with HR professionals to discuss how they can find ethical ways to deal with challenging situations in their jobs, and thinking about the difficult questions, for example around mental health, duty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

We continue to share the benefits of being a B Corp™ through networking and social events. This activity has increased exponentially over the last year, with a wide range of events focused on sustainability, such as co-sponsoring the Pick, People, Planet, Pint event hosted by the Positive Nature Network, a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to connect businesses to nature so that both can thrive. Their monthly networking events facilitate education, collaboration, and action to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises. Hazel Sanders and Charlotte Cole from the Firm’s Employment team attended an event in May 2024, which involved a running litter pick, and collaborating with Isaac Kenyon from Climate Explorers to look at what it means to be a sustainability leader.

We have hosted or spoken at several events to help raise the profile of B Corp™ in the region, including a B Local event with Optimising IT. In a first of its kind event in Exeter, we joined forces with tech experts Optimising IT to host a B Corporation event at the heart of the city, where we were able to share our commitment towards fostering a sustainable and responsible business community in and around the city.

We also continue to highlight the benefits of B Corp™ through our communications with clients, from website articles comparing the values of B Corp™ and Employee Ownership, and using our advertorial spend to share our B Corp™ journey. Knowing the value of embedding B Corp™ values throughout the Firm, we have also hosted internal events to engage our employees and focusing our CX sessions on how we talk about B Corp™ to clients.

A key date in the region’s diary, the West Country Tourism Conference, proved another great opportunity for Verity Slater to be able to talk about the journey to B Corp™ with an engaged audience of the travel and tourism sector. As well as sharing the Firm’s own journey, Verity spoke about the Giving Back programme, the route to Net Zero, and our Impact Report.



Other examples of impactful work this year include:

- Supporting fellow B Corp™ businesses to protect their values and ethos on obtaining external investment.
- Supporting businesses in using corporate governance frameworks to embed and shape their purpose and adhere to their values so that environmental, social and governance considerations are consistently integrated into their operations, stakeholder relationships and supply chains.
- Supporting clients through transition to employee ownership.
- Working with businesses to change their legal constitution to reflect balancing people, planet and profit, which involves working with boards and leadership teams to help explain what this means as well as making the required legal changes and advising how to ensure that their organisation is meeting its social and regulatory requirements.
- Our Intellectual Property and Data Protection team are increasingly working with businesses that value balancing planet and profit, including those that have achieved B Corp™ status. They help purposeful businesses protect their intellectual property and implement the necessary policies and contractual terms.

Working with businesses to change their legal constitution to reflect balancing people, planet and profit.

- In collaboration with specialist search providers, our Real Estate lawyers are supporting clients in understanding their legal obligations and in adopting appropriate provisions in their documentation, having regard to their ESG strategies and being mindful of the reality of cost implications, as well as flagging the potential for physical climate risks and how they may impact on clients' real estate investment.
- Our Construction team advise developers and contractors in respect of sustainable building methods such as Passive House or the use of low carbon materials, encouraging clients to consider the environmental impact of the work at an early stage and to ensure they include provisions in their contracts to ensure that sustainability demands are met. Our Development and Planning teams also work closely with our clients and their consultants to ensure they are aware of issues such as biodiversity net gain, environmental protection and carbon net zero – from legal compliance to competitive, strategic advantage.
- Our specialist Energy team have a long history of helping private landowners put renewable energy solutions onto their land. This involves specialist contracts and negotiation and consideration of best protecting the land used while maximising the renewable energy potential. We also advise on battery storage projects and EV charger deployment and development of brownfield sites.
- Our Rural team is increasingly working with clients interested in protecting the natural habitat. We advise on the evolving opportunities for carbon offsetting and biodiversity net gain contracts and around sustainable diversification working closely with clients and their other rural advisors. We also support wildlife trusts to preserve their land assets and protect them going forward.
- Our Regulatory team supports clients to meet their regulatory duties, working closely alongside the Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive and the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs to avoid and minimise damage to people and planet.



OUR CONCLUSION

Since our Certification was confirmed in late December 2022, we have strengthened our internal processes, made some positive changes and encouraged and inspired our colleagues to embrace the principles of B Corp™ in all they do.

Our journey so far has presented its fair share of twists and turns, and indeed hazards, and as can be seen by some of our missed goals, it's not easy! However, we continue to drive the Firm forward in our sustainability goals and believe we are making great progress.

The process of reporting annually on goals has added a real commitment and resilience in the Firm – to protect the ways we are already creating a positive impact and seeking to incrementally improve.

What is clear is that becoming a B Corp™ has not only benefited our clients in helping them to achieve their sustainability goals, boosted employee engagement with our people, and supported our communities in tangible ways, it has also boosted our financial success with increased turnover and profits, all while staying true to our culture and ethos of being a force for good.

We look forward to reporting on our impact and progress next year.





Follow our journey here
stephens-scown.co.uk
