

The Bates Wells Sustainability and Responsibility Pledge



About us

Bates Wells is a purpose-led, values-driven organisation. This has been our defining characteristic for over fifty years. We are committed to delivering positive impact and achieving this by striving to be a sustainable and responsible law firm.

Our Pledge

This Pledge reflects our desire to be transparent about how we approach our work. We hope it will attract like-minded individuals and organisations to work with us towards the same aims. We also hope it will encourage others not only to adopt similar practices, but to be explicit about doing so.

Sustainability and responsibility

What we mean by sustainable is conducting our affairs and interacting with our stakeholders in order to further the objectives of:

- meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;
- not depleting natural capital; and
- improving the quality of life for all within the carrying capacity of earth's ecosystems.

What we mean by responsible is that we:

- seek to be sustainable as a business and facilitate a just transition in doing so;
- recognise the social and environmental impacts of the activities we carry out and facilitate through the provision of our services, and seek to ensure that those activities have a material positive overall impact on society and the environment;
- seek to use the law in ways which serve the public interest, both in relation to minimising ecological harm and climate heating, and in respect of access to justice, the protection of human rights and upholding the rule of law.

Recognising the urgency of our time

The situation in which we are living and working is volatile, with high levels of uncertainty as multiple crises converge. To act with integrity and honesty, we need to support the emergence of new, regenerative ways of working and interacting and to scale back those aspects of the existing system that are harmful to us collectively, even though we remain dependent upon elements of that system for now. This means it may not be possible immediately to implement all aspects of the changes we wish achieve, though we will be constant in our authentic drive to work towards genuine sustainable and responsible legal practice, and will seek to achieve meaningful improvement year on year.

Where appropriate, we will explore with our clients where there are perceived or actual tensions between their best interests, their instructions and wider stakeholder and public interest considerations, recognising our duty to act in our clients' best interests and in line with instructions and that in the long-term sustainable and responsible practices are likely to align with the clients' best interests

All of this is in the context, of providing high quality legal advice in practical and accessible ways, which meet our clients' requirements and comply with our duties as solicitors.

Pledge principles

What this means in practice is that **we will:**

- endeavour to work with more clients who are committed to creating transformative positive impacts
- seek to advise, where relevant, in ways which optimise our clients' positive impact and reduce their negative impact
- decline to act where we believe that to do so, taken as a whole, is incompatible with our commitment to sustainable and responsible legal practice
- seek to use our influence with policymakers, regulators, wider stakeholders and peers to encourage similarly sustainable and responsible practices
- support initiatives to develop ways to measure the impact of the activities we advise upon so that we can identify this with confidence and consistency and improve that impact over time.

We will not get every decision right, but we will do our best to learn from our mistakes. None of us can resolve the challenges we face alone, but all of us have a part to play – and we commit to playing ours as fully as we are able.

