

Bates Wells: our climate commitments

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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Our climate commitments

Annual report 2022

Bates Wells has a long history of supporting environmental causes and organisations. We deepened this with the commitments we made in 2019 when we formally recognised the Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Crisis. In doing so we made several commitments to address our impact on the environment, including one to report on progress against these commitments. This report sets out our actions in the 2022 calendar year.



Lawrie Simanowitz
Partner and Climate Programme
Board Member



“There is lots to be proud of in this report. A highlight is our switch to a more sustainable pension fund. But there is recent news that the world is in imminent danger of crossing the threshold of 1.5°C increase in global warming since pre-industrial levels. We all need to step up our actions to help minimise the looming crisis and chaos that will ensue. And so Bates Wells will continue with – and increase – our climate initiatives.”

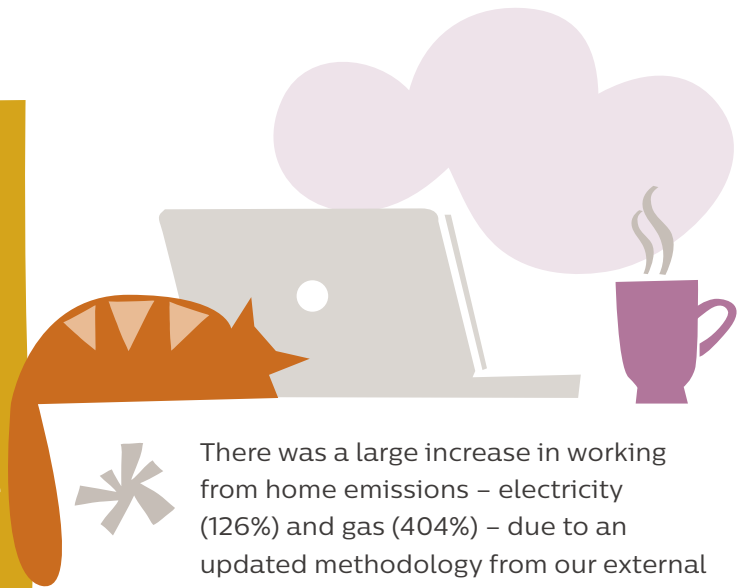
Lawrie Simanowitz

Commitment #1

Decrease our carbon emissions, achieve net zero carbon in 2019 and work to reduce our Scope 3 emissions.

While we continue our work to reduce our carbon footprint, our emissions for 2021 came in at **120.9 tonnes of CO₂e**. This was a small increase on 2020's 118.1 tonnes.

Our last verified carbon footprint data is for the calendar year 2021. Because we are in a leased building, we are reliant on data from third parties which can delay our ability to calculate our carbon footprint.



There was a large increase in working from home emissions – electricity (126%) and gas (404%) – due to an updated methodology from our external consultants to improve the accuracy in calculating these.

Activity	Sub-activity	2020 total carbon footprint (tCO ₂ e)	2021 total carbon footprint (tCO ₂ e)	% Change
Utilities	Office electricity (location-Based)	76.5	61.8	-19.2%
	Water	0.6	0.2	-61.9%
	Waste	0.1	0.1	-
	Paper	2.1	1.2	-42.6%
Working from Home (WFH)	Gas usage	6.7	33.9	404.3%
	Electricity (location-based)	-	11.7	-
	Electricity (market-based)	3.8	8.6	126.4%
Commute	Commute	20.4	9.0	-55.8%
Business travel	Air	1.3	0.2	-85.9%
	Rail	1.6	0.6	-60.1%
	Road	4.2	2.1	-49.5%
	Ferry	0.8	-	-
Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Location-based*	118.1	120.9	↑ 2.3%

*We chose to rely on the location-based calculations as these are likely to be more accurate than market-based emissions.

Balancing our emissions

We balanced our residual emissions through B Corp Sustainable Surf's SeaTrees Tokens for our verified carbon credits and supported another B Corp Ecologi by funding the planting of 1210 trees (10 for each of ton of Carbon emitted) as a way of compensating for those emissions that we haven't yet been able to measure.

Sustainable Surf's SeaTrees Tokens include credits for the **Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project** which supports biodiversity and increases the effectiveness of mangrove forests as blue carbon storage ecosystems. The scheme also plants four mangrove trees in the **Biak Island** region of Indonesia, and restores one square foot of kelp in **Palos Verdes, California** – which collectively have the potential to sequester an additional ton of CO2 over their lifetime.

We removed 11 mini fridges from our meeting rooms to reduce our energy consumption and recycled them responsibly through our specialist recycling partner. All drinks are now made 'on demand' by our Reception team.

Reducing printers

A printer/photocopier review project reduced the number of devices in the office from eight to five meaning lower energy consumption. The devices we removed were at the end of their life cycle and responsibly recycled through a designated recover and renew scheme.

We avoided purchasing 291 plastic bottles of cleaning spray over the calendar year using our cleaning provider's soluble cleaning products.



We reduced our space by 8,000 sq. ft.

Our premises review project resulted in an 8,000 square foot reduction of our office space which we reconfigured to better meet our needs. We've seen a reduction in energy use as a result with one less kitchen, fewer desks, reduction in lighting and a smaller space to heat/cool.



We introduced more plants into our work environment

We introduced an additional 30m² of planters across the office that we filled with plants suitable for office environments which our own research demonstrated had the highest potential carbon absorption rates. Increasing the plants in work environments has also been found to improve employee wellbeing.

Commitment #2

Take the crisis into account in developing our business strategy.

A key part of our business strategy in 2022 was an internal education programme to help empower our people to feel more confident in having conversations with clients and contacts about the climate emergency.

We launched our internal one-page Climate Programme playbook, summarising the work we do, both for our clients and internally, to help tackle the climate emergency.

Climate crisis breakfast briefing

We hosted an internal breakfast briefing to showcase two short videos about the climate emergency – including the first of three training videos created by the Net Zero Lawyers Alliance. We plan to host more of these events in 2023.



We keep climate crisis conversations going

We've established a group of Climate Connectors from around the firm to help us establish two-way dialogue between all parts of the business and the Climate Programme. This has helped us to keep the climate emergency alive in conversations in team meetings, and in getting climate related objectives into department business plans.



Climate related objectives are now in more than 70% of our practice area business plans

More than 70% of our practice areas included specific climate-related objectives in their business plans for the year. These covered specific action through our legal services, such as incorporating The Chancery Lane Project Clauses into contracts, as well as developing knowledge and expertise within our teams.



Greener Litigation and Greener Arbitration pledges

Our Dispute Resolution team signed up to both the Greener Litigation and Greener Arbitration pledges, encouraging parties to legal action to go digital and cut out paper bundles.

Greener Litigation 

 CAMPAIGN FOR GREENER ARBITRATIONS

We have developed a strategic litigation practice across the firm drawing on the expertise of our Dispute Resolution, Public and Regulatory and Charity and Social Enterprise Departments.

The group is already supporting work to address the climate crisis and social justice while developing knowledge and networks in this area to support clients who want to take legal action.



Commitment #3

Use the law as a means to address the crisis.

We acted for the trustees of the Ashden Trust and the Mark Leonard Trust in the landmark High Court case of *Butler-Sloss v the Charity Commission*.

The ruling confirmed that the trustees could align their investments with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement to keep global temperatures within 1.5°C of pre-industrial levels. The decision has the potential to make a wide-ranging impact, with charities in England & Wales holding investments worth an estimated £1.5 billion. The implications of the decision also go beyond the charity sector, having the potential to change the way that investors manage their portfolios.

We regularly work with Triodos Bank to support their loans to positive impact projects.

Last year our Real Estate team worked with Triodos to support Heal Rewilding purchase a dairy farm in Somerset to create a nature reserve that is also bringing new jobs into the local community. The plan is to allow the land to return to nature without human management, apart from some early interventions such as pond restoration, wildflower reintroductions and wetland creation and the long-term care of grazing animals. The site will be a blueprint for establishing major nature recovery sites in all 48 English counties by 2050 which are expected to cover almost 25,000 acres.

CDP is a charity that runs the global disclosure system for investors, companies, cities, states and regions to assess and manage their environmental impacts, playing a crucial role in building a sustainable global economy.

We have provided three secondments, charity, and commercial law support to CDP and given legal support for the Science Based Targets initiative. This is a collaboration between CDP, the UN Global Compact, WWF, World Resources Institute and We Mean Business. It sets standards against which businesses can set science-based net-zero targets for their emissions reductions in line with the Paris Agreement and validates businesses targets against those standards.



The Royal British Legion instructed us to help them make their extensive property portfolios more sustainable.

We gave the client advice and training on the MEES Regulations and Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) and provided training on installing solar panels and batteries in their buildings while also helping them to explore how they can offer grants to tenants seeking to undertake energy improvement schemes.

We have worked with lots of our clients to support the installation of renewable energy solutions and storage through taking and granting leases for the installation of solar panels, battery storage, hydro-electric and wind power projects.

Woodland Trust

We have been working closely with the Woodland Trust to develop a suite of precedent documents to enable increased tree planting, woodland management and carbon sequestration in anticipation of the “Conservation Covenants” proposed by the Environment Act 2021. This has involved detailed drafting which brings together several pieces of legislation and guidance, including the Woodland Carbon Code, to ensure that landowners are bound to ensure that land subject to the agreements is permanently woodland for the capture and storage of carbon. This is complex, ground-breaking and vital work to address the urgent need to stabilise and ultimately reduce the amount of carbon in the atmosphere.



Chancery Lane Project

We use climate aligned contract clauses from The Chancery Lane Project in our work, for example a license agreement between one of our clients and a number of further education colleges. It commits both parties to the Paris Climate Agreement target aimed at limiting global warming to well below 2°, preferably 1.5°C. By including this clause, over 40 organisations will seek to conduct their activities at all times in a manner consistent with reducing global warming.

Stepping Stones to Sustainability

We developed Stepping Stones to Sustainability guides because we want to encourage all organisations to take their first steps into a fairer way of operating for people and planet. These focus on tangible ways to green employment culture, reduce carbon footprint and build sustainability into supply chains for both charity and commercial organisations.

Commitment #4

Engage all our people in decisions relating to our impact on the climate and biodiversity crises and to encourage all our people to live in more environmentally-friendly ways.

Sustainable pensions

We've switched our default pension fund for new joiners to the more sustainable Aviva Stewardship Fund. This came into effect from 1 February 2022 and 35% of our people now invest their pensions into a fund that addresses climate change. Our benefits provider tells us this is a pioneering approach amongst law firms. In the coming months, we hope that more of our employees will choose to move their pension into the Stewardship fund.

Green pensions charter

We signed up to the Green Pensions Charter to showcase our commitment to sustainable pension funds and encourage others to switch to more sustainable funds. We have supported various Make My Money Matter campaigns to raise awareness of the positive impact of making sure your money is invested in funds and with banks that seek to minimise their negative impact on the planet.

Climate Programme Recognition Reward scheme

For B Corp Month in March 2022, we introduced a new Climate Programme Recognition Reward scheme rewarding colleagues with a voucher or the option to donate to a charity to recognise positive environmental actions, including those taken in their personal lives.

Climate Perks policy

We carried out a sustainable travel campaign re-launching our Climate Perks policy and encouraging sustainable personal travel, as well as gifting our people reusable travel kits from fellow B Corp The Beauty Kitchen.

We have a rolling calendar of climate related events on our intranet so colleagues can see and sign up to whatever is of interest. We've also created a central log where we're encouraging people to share key points or feedback on events that they've attended.



We convinced our landlord to let us install four insect hotels on our roof garden to support biodiversity and protect pollinators from predators during hibernation.



London Climate Action Week

We marked London Climate Action Week by hosting a session on Sustainable Pensions with responsible investment consultants Impact Lens. We also showcased a series of climate emergency videos in our kitchen all week.

Climate Programme Culture Club

We launched our Climate Programme Culture Club as an informal way for people to get together and talk about cultural works addressing the Climate Emergency and Biodiversity crisis. Our first session looked at the film *Don't Look Up* and the second discussed the book *From What is to What if* by Rob Hopkins.



Litter pick

We held our first Climate Programme volunteering afternoon with a litter pick at Hackney Marshes (and one of our people carried out her own litter pick that afternoon in her local woods). We collected three bags of recycling and two bags of general waste – the highlight being a rusted anchor chain!



We provided our people with a lunchtime planet saving kit comprised of a reusable sandwich bag and bamboo cutlery set to try and reduce our lunch related waste in the office.

Recycling campaign

We ran a recycling campaign to encourage people to bring in hard to recycle items from home. This allows them to recycle batteries, plastic bottle tops, stamps, crisp packets, medicine blister packs, beauty packaging and contact lenses. Over the coming year we will begin to track the impact of these schemes and look to add more.



Commitment #5

Collaborate with others to amplify our impact.

Making a positive change through collaboration

We continue to be engaged with a host of other networks seeking to make positive change including:



For London Climate Action Week, we took part in a session on Net Zero Aligned Legal Services and spoke at Reset Connect about making B Corp certification more achievable and investment strategies for green SMEs.

COP27

For COP27 we joined the Walk2COP27 initiative. 20 of our people signed up to take part in a virtual walk from Glasgow to Egypt.

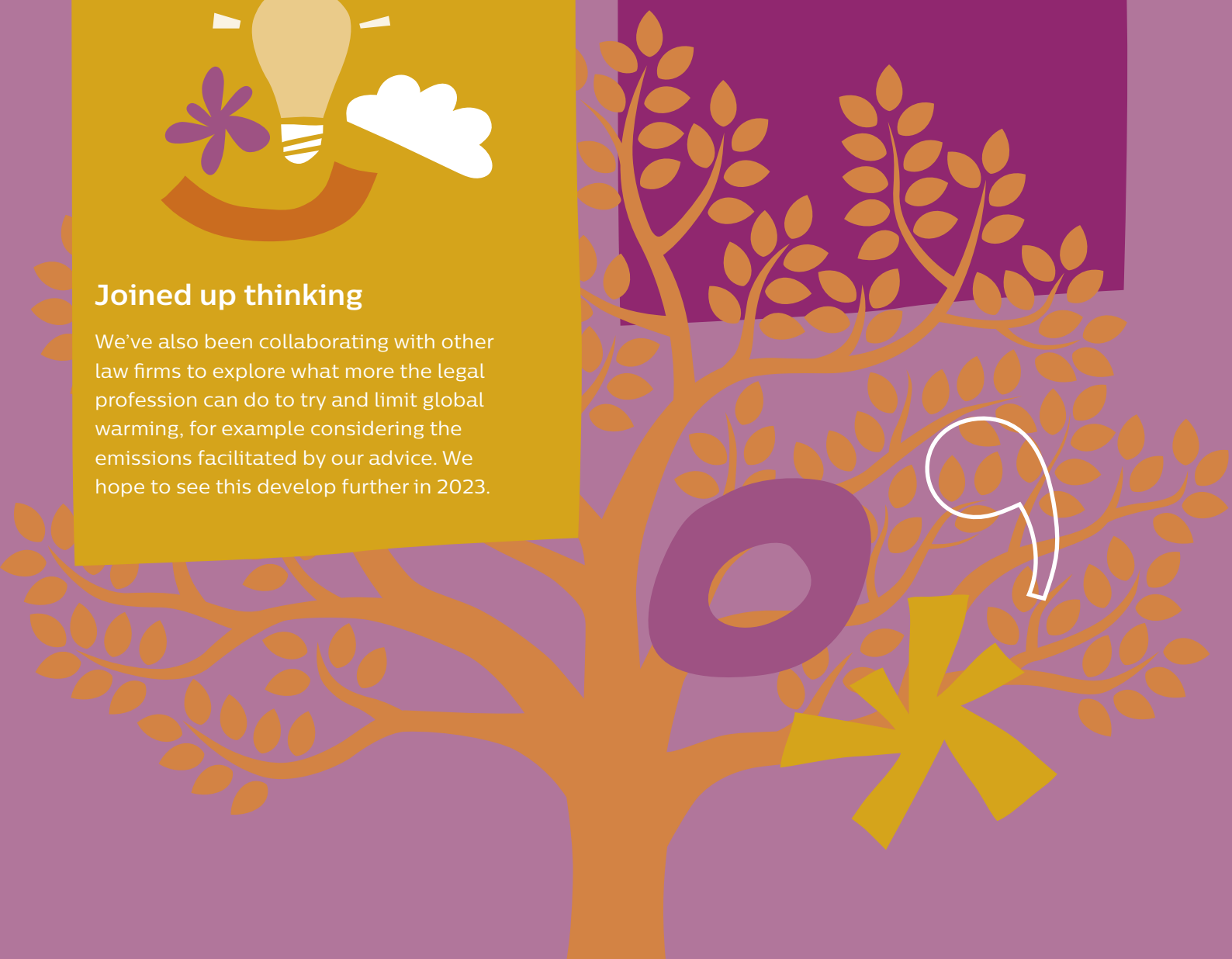
Trees were planted by the **Jane Goodall Institute** for every km walked, run, or cycled during the six weeks leading up to COP.

2,764 trees
were planted on behalf of Bates Wells through our activities.



Joined up thinking

We've also been collaborating with other law firms to explore what more the legal profession can do to try and limit global warming, for example considering the emissions facilitated by our advice. We hope to see this develop further in 2023.



Looking ahead

As I write in 2023 looking back on what we achieved last year, I know there's always more to do on climate change.

We have just published our Sustainability and Responsibility Pledge, which will help progress our climate commitments. The pledge reflects our desire to be transparent about how we approach our work, to ensure that we operate in a way that has an overall positive impact in terms of the clients we work with, the work that we do and the way that we approach work or clients who may not already align with our climate and social justice commitments. We hope it will attract like-minded individuals and organisations to work with us in taking climate action and encourage others not only to adopt similar practices, but to be explicit about doing so.



Sally Procopis
Chief Operating Officer



“As I write in 2023 looking back on what we achieved last year, I know there's always more to do on climate change... We have just finalised our Sustainability and Responsibility Pledge to build upon our climate commitments.”

Sally Procopis

We've agreed to set a Science Based Target as part of our ongoing net zero commitment and have appointed consultants to work with us on this.

We've investigated electric car salary sacrifice schemes and will be consulting our people to see whether there's interest in us offering such a scheme.

Moving forward, we plan to include our actions against our commitments in our annual impact report.

Making a profit is core to all businesses but our goal is to combine this with a real social purpose. Our values are pivotal to us, they shape our decisions and the way we live and work.

We focus on positive social impact as much as we focus on being a successful law firm. Our top tier legal advice is coupled with a real desire to drive change and we were the first UK law firm to achieve B Corp certification, awarded to businesses that balance purpose and profit.

Today, our clients are diverse – from corporate household names, to public bodies, to start-ups. We're also the firm of choice for thousands of charities and social enterprises. We continue to lead the market we helped to shape.

Bates Wells challenges what is possible in legal expertise delivery.

Get in touch:

+44(0)20 7551 7777

hello@bateswells.co.uk

