

Bates Wells Impact Report 2021, the story so far:

extraordinary times,
amazing people

Certified



Corporation

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“This report aims to put down a marker to show what we have done, the impact this has had, and how we want to build on that. We will continue with this work and, if by reading and engaging with this, others are influenced to join us, we are one step closer to our aim of creating positive social and environmental change.”

Martin Bunch, Managing Partner

Bates Wells Impact Report 2021, the story so far: extraordinary times, amazing people

I couldn't be more proud of everyone at Bates Wells and the way that they have continued to make a huge difference over the last year. Particular highlights for me are the rulings on the Uber and Kids Company cases, our continued efforts on the environment, and our work to improve diversity and representation here at Bates Wells while also supporting those organisations that are actively working to address racism and discrimination in the UK. For the coming year, I want to see us build on all of this to shape policy and work with others to push for the wider changes needed to address social and racial inequality and the environmental crisis.

Despite the challenging nature of 2020, I am glad that we can share so much positive news about the

work that we continue to do with our clients, people and partners to create purpose and impact. Our values as a firm shine through, even in the middle of these extraordinary times. The way that our people have reacted to the last year shows that we can not only deal with challenges in a positive way, but we can do this and continue to make a difference using law as a force for good.

This report aims to put down a marker to show what we have done, the impact this has had, and how we want to build on our achievements. We will continue with this work and, if by reading and engaging with this, others are influenced to join us, we are one step closer to our aim of creating positive social and environmental change.



Martin Bunch
Managing Partner

Community

We have an impact business model that makes us unique. This means that since we were founded in 1970, we have supported clients who want to have a wider impact on the world, including charities, social enterprises and purpose-led businesses. This 50 year focus on clients who are making a difference and doing good has given us deep sectoral knowledge, corporate memory, experience and expertise in enabling those making a positive change.

Supporting organisations whose work aligns with our values as individuals creates a working environment where our people get real enjoyment and meaning from their work while giving their best to our clients. The experience we get from this helps us drive our own impact – collectively and individually. Using our knowledge, intelligence and market position, we are able to pursue strategic litigation that has a wider impact (such as the challengers of Uber), and strategic advocacy (Better Business Act) to make positive changes in the UK's economy. We use our expertise and values to partner with others working to make a difference (B Corps, Business Declares). Our people leverage the networks, knowledge and experience they gain from working with our clients to drive positive change outside work through volunteering and trusteeships.

This model helps us attract talented people and clients working to make a real difference; it gives us opportunities to work with like-minded organisations; and it means that we have an impact beyond our legal advice. We hope to be an example of what is possible and to act as an ambassador to encourage other businesses to join the movement to make business a force for good.

This section looks at some of our highlights last year when working with our clients, partners and wider society.

Community: Clients

Success for us is about how our work can lead to a positive impact for wider society. We have worked on some truly groundbreaking cases this year, including for the challengers of Uber and the trustees of Kids Company. Our teams have pushed boundaries and achieved results that will have a long-term positive effect, while our clients are working to redress the imbalances in society and the environmental challenges that we all face.

Uber

The Bates Wells team provided nearly five years of pro bono support to the challengers of Uber. The case culminated in a Supreme Court decision that drivers for the app should be considered workers.

2.8m

are expected to be positively affected by the decision.

Kids Company

We acted for former trustees of Kids Company when the Official Receiver issued director disqualification claims against them. The judge dismissed the case sending a clear message to all charity trustees that they will continue to receive the protection of the court when making honest and reasonable judgments.

Blueprint for All

One of our key aspirations is to use our expertise to address social and racial injustice. Supporting our client Blueprint for All is helping us achieve this while helping them to widen their impact in a time when their work has grown exponentially.

Challengers of Uber

In February 2021 the Supreme Court ruled that drivers for the ride-hailing app Uber should be considered workers. This ruling followed nearly five years of pro bono legal work and support from our employment team. We took on this case in the belief that our help could deliver significant and systemic change for workers' rights across the UK gig economy. The drivers did not have the means to take on Uber, but we believed that supporting them was the right thing to do.

We argued that the claimants, and therefore others working under similar arrangements in the gig economy, should be classified as workers and not as self-employed independent contractors. The case went to the Employment Appeal Tribunal and the Court of Appeal before the final decision was handed down in the Supreme Court. The ruling means that Uber drivers are entitled to the National Minimum Wage, paid annual leave and protection under anti-discrimination laws. There is an estimated £12,000 owed to each Uber driver and the government is expected to receive £2 billion worth of lost taxes as a result of the case.

However, this ruling goes further than Uber. It is a milestone in employment law that is likely to have a positive impact on the estimated 2.8 million people working across the gig economy in the UK. We hope the decision will mean that other companies working in the gig economy are discouraged from ignoring workers' rights.

Our client **James Farrer** said: *"The Bates Wells team have expertly guided us on this long and difficult journey... In this way, the law has become accessible and our arguments – which are about social justice – are being heard. We are already seeing the wider effects of this as the political and regulatory landscape is reshaped."*

Rachel Mathieson, one of our lawyers who led on the case, said *"I was skipping with joy when Paul Jennings asked me to work on this case back in 2017 and of course I was very happy to do it on a pro bono basis. Our clients were not able to afford expensive legal representation, but they were up against Uber, who were extremely well resourced and had a fantastic legal team."*

The best moment was telling the clients the decision. Being able to call them and tell them that they had won was amazing! The judgment is all about supporting the most vulnerable in society and it was a very emotional moment for all of us. Working on this case will undoubtedly be the highlight of my career."



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James Farrer, former Uber driver

Matthew Taylor from the NHS Confederation spoke about the wider implications of the case for workers: *“This case represents a turning point in worker rights. I think the judgment means that the other big platform companies now know that time is up for them in the way that they treat their workers. If Uber had won the case, the whole industry would have felt that they could get away with it.*

I believe that legislation should be doing the work that the courts are having to do. While this decision has played an important role in reinforcing basic rights, we ultimately need to keep pressing the government to bring the Employment Bill before parliament. Doing this and making the treatment of workers part of the ESG reporting agenda within companies would make a huge difference to worker rights.”

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Matthew Taylor, NHS Confederation

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2.8m

people in the ‘gig-economy’ are likely to be positively affected by the decision to classify Uber drivers as workers with employee rights.

Kids Company

Keeping Kids Company was a well-known charity providing support to inner-city children and young people in London and Bristol. After the charity was liquidated in 2015, the Official Receiver carried out an investigation into the management and affairs of the charity and why it had failed. The investigation led to director disqualification claims being issued against the charity's former trustees and chief executive. This meant that the Official Receiver considered that they were unfit to be involved in the management of a company because of what happened at the charity. Specifically, it was alleged that the trustees and chief executive caused or allowed Kids Company to operate an unsustainable business model.

We acted for five of the trustees. We knew that the implications of the Official Receiver's actions were potentially hugely damaging to the charity sector because of the questions they raised about trustee liability. We considered that there was no basis for the Official Receiver's decision. Our society relies on individuals who are prepared to take up trustee roles on an unpaid basis and who volunteer their time to support charities in their work. By putting these trustees on trial, the Official Receiver caused much disquiet in the sector and is likely to have put people off taking up such roles.

Lawyers from our Charity & Social Enterprise and Dispute Resolution teams worked on the case for a number of years before it went to the High Court at the end of 2020. After a 10-week trial, the High Court dismissed the case. The court found that the trustees had made honest judgments within the range of reasonable decisions in difficult circumstances. Mrs Justice Falk found that the public needed no protection from the '*highly impressive and dedicated*' trustees. She said that she was '*wholly satisfied*' that disqualification was not warranted.

It took great courage for the trustees to defend the proceedings and in taking this stance they have benefited the whole of the charity sector. Their total vindication sent a clear message to trustees that they will continue to receive the protection of the court when making honest and reasonable judgments under difficult circumstances. We hope that the outcome will restore confidence on charity boards and will give individuals the assurance they need to take up rewarding trustee roles that are so vital to the proper functioning of our society.



“The High Court judgment is hugely significant – probably ground-breaking – for charity trustees in this country. The case was detailed, the judge was thorough, and the trustees were completely vindicated.”

Jane Tyler, Kids Company Trustee

Philip Kirkpatrick, the Partner leading the case, said: *“Having considered all the facts, the actions and decisions of the trustees and the reasons they took them, I was incensed that these proceedings were started. I told the Official Receiver that they would undoubtedly fail while nevertheless having a hugely detrimental effect on the sector. But, once the proceedings started, I realised that a fair trial would ensure the trustees’ decisions were fairly and properly judged, after the vilification they had received in the press and elsewhere, and we were determined to help them see justice done. I hope it is now clear that no trustee, doing their best in difficult circumstances, should ever be put through such an ordeal again.”*

Jane Tyler, one of the trustees that we represented commented, *“The High Court judgment is hugely significant – probably groundbreaking – for charity trustees in this country. The case was detailed, the judge was thorough, and the trustees were completely vindicated. The judge was satisfied that the trustees had in place the procedures necessary to govern, were fully aware of their responsibilities and that it was reasonable for them to rely on senior staff and external experts when carrying out their duties as trustees. The funding issues experienced by the charity were not unusual, nor was the lack of substantial reserves. The judgment should provide comfort to existing and prospective trustees.”*

We hope that the outcome will restore confidence on charity boards and will give individuals the assurance they need to take up rewarding trustee roles that are so vital to the proper functioning of our society.

Trustees can now be confident that their actions and decisions have the protection of the courts.

Blueprint for All

Blueprint for All (formerly the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust) seeks to create positive social change for young people and communities. They believe in creating an inclusive society and make a difference every day by working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds between the ages of 13 and 30. They also work to support community groups and young people to play an active role in creating a more inclusive culture to achieve the lasting social impact that we need. They are making a fairer and more equitable future happen across the UK.

Since May 2020, their work has grown significantly, and they have been catapulted into the spotlight in the UK's fight against racial inequality. We are proud to work with and support Blueprint for All on a pro bono basis as they widen their impact and continue to push for a more equal society. As a firm, one of our key aspirations is to use our expertise to address social and racial injustice. Our partnership with Blueprint for All is important in helping us to achieve this.

We asked **Samara Lawrence**, Solicitor, about her involvement with Blueprint for All: *"I reached out to the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust (now Blueprint for All) last summer when George Floyd was murdered. Blueprint for All was a natural choice for me because George Floyd's murder really resonated with what had happened to Stephen Lawrence and I knew that they had been working in the racial justice and equality space for a long time. I spoke to others in the firm who were also supporters of the charity and we discussed how we could support them to make sure that they were in the best possible position to address the challenges they faced of suddenly being in the limelight."*

As a firm we are looking at the issues around racial equality in two distinct ways. We want to support grassroots organisations as part of our pro bono offering to address social and racial injustice more widely. Our partnership with Blueprint for All means that we can do that.

Separately to this we are also looking at how we address diversity and inclusion internally here at Bates Wells. I hope that Blueprint for All can support us in this and hold us to account while we work to make our firm a more inclusive and representative workplace."

We spoke to **Chelsea Way**, Head of Operations at Blueprint for All, to find out more about what they do and their aspirations for the future: *"We believe that talent should be respected and nurtured irrespective of your background. We support disadvantaged young people by dismantling artificial barriers that hold so many back. We work with individual children and communities to make a change. The Black Lives Matter movement has accelerated us into the forefront of this work."*

Over the last year we have grown exponentially both in terms of our team and the projects that we are running. We don't have all the support in house to be able to do everything that we want to, and so Bates Wells' legal expertise is helping us to put the right policies and procedures in place. So far they have helped us with governance and property advice and they have supported us in developing our processes around corporate donations – these have increased 80 times above the previous level in the last year."

Better Food and Triodos Bank

When we help our clients to collaborate our collective impact is amplified. One such collaboration is between **Better Food** (an ethical and organic supermarket) and **Triodos Bank** (the UK's first sustainable bank and a B Corp). We have worked with Better Food to set up an ethical bond with Triodos to support their expansion. This will lead to the creation of purposeful jobs while supporting biodiversity and sustainable farming practices in the UK. Our expertise in social investment is helping Better Food, Triodos and several other purposeful businesses to expand their impact.

Phil Haughton of Better Food explained their mission: *"I founded Better Food in 1992. It has grown from a home delivery outfit to a fully-fledged three-store, £7m-turnover retail outfit, specialising in local, organic and ethical produce. Our mission is to make organic food as accessible to as many people as possible while being fair to all our stakeholders – from our customers, to our staff, to our producers. We aspire to roll out 100 Better Food stores.*

Over the last year we have worked with Bates Wells and Triodos to raise money on a new bond to expand Better Foods with another two stores. Our relationship with both organisations is a really smooth one and I feel totally safe and secure that I'm working with people who are on the same mission to make the world a better place. There is this incredible backdrop of ethics that is superb. It is a real privilege and an honour in this crazy world to have a bank and a legal firm that can support us so beautifully. The world would be so much more civilised if we had more bankers and lawyers like these two.

I have big aspirations for Better Food, including B Corp status and employee ownership. As we grow, we really want to work on making sure that our staff and local citizens are embedded in their local stores. I want the legacy and beliefs that were part of the company when I set it up over 28 years ago to remain while allowing a level buy in for all our stakeholders."

Whitni Thomas from Triodos Bank talked about how we work together: *"Triodos Bank was set up in 1980 solely for the purpose of using money for positive social change and this makes us really unique. We lend to and invest in organisations that we believe have a positive impact on people and planet.*

My team helps charities, social enterprises and community businesses to access capital. We get to know the organisations, understand their mission and figure out what finance will work best for them before connecting them to investors. Bates Wells have done the legal work for bonds that we have promoted on behalf of a number of our customers.

We first started working with Bates Wells about seven or eight years ago. We were attracted to them because of their understanding of the social investment space. Since we certified as a B Corp, it has been really nice to know that we are working with a fellow B Corp as well. With legal services, the relationships that we have with individuals are really important. One of the particularly nice things is that there is a genuine, personal values alignment, so our working relationship is straightforward and responsive.

As a bank, Triodos wants to continue to show that finance can be done in a sustainable way."

Rubbish Ideas

Rubbish Ideas came to us for pro bono support to set up their sister-company, **The Rubbish Project**. They take throwaway everyday items and transform them into a circular economy model, thereby reducing waste and pressure on finite resources. We were impressed by the scale of their ambitions: both in terms of the positive change they believe they can make happen by applying their design skills to environmental challenges, and their confidence that they can take their principles into commercial environments. In supporting them to succeed we are continuing to work towards our climate commitment of using law as a force for good and helping them to have an impact on currently unsustainable models around single-use items.

David Hunter, Consultant, explained why we supported them with pro bono legal advice: “We have a history of backing projects we think may prove successful in the medium term and giving them support when it is most needed; the Rubbish Ideas team felt like another in this lineage. Their energy and confidence were infectious, and we thought if they could communicate this to us, they could do it with others too, so why not help where we could?”

We spoke to **Connor Bryant** from Rubbish Ideas and The Rubbish Project: “Rubbish Ideas is a design consultancy with a difference. As passionate environmentalists, we believe in following the science and making sure that we’re making a positive impact. We only design, make and sell

products and services that support the circular economy. To do this we’ve teamed up with a Belgian company and set up a sister organisation – The Rubbish Project. Our focus is on building large-scale systems collecting, recycling, processing, manufacturing and tracking products throughout their lifecycle. The key to our approach is leading and demonstrating how our society can move away from the current linear and wasteful model towards closed-loop solutions that need to be adopted on a global scale.

When we set up Rubbish Ideas, we were overwhelmed by the amount of legal advice we needed – and in particular how much it cost. For The Rubbish Project we realised that we had to take a different approach by getting early-stage advice to minimise the cost of complex negotiations and setting up legal structures. That’s where Bates Wells have come in. They’ve been incredibly helpful in advising on our partnership structure and sorting out contracts with suppliers and potential customers on a pro bono basis. We are confident that we’ll be able to have a big impact, but at the moment we don’t have enough money coming in to pay for front-end legal costs.

I value working with other people who share our values and ambitions. It means that we are multiplying our impact and encouraging others to do so. If you push it down your supply chain, it means you are not supporting companies that have a negative impact.”



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Connor Bryant, Rubbish Ideas



Vivid Economics and Planetrics

Vivid Economics helps its clients respond to critical and structural challenges, including the urgent implications of climate change and the transition to net-zero carbon emissions. Planetrics makes it simple for financial institutions to quantify, report and manage climate-related risks and opportunities using world-leading analytics that model and price risks for tens of thousands of individual assets. The shareholders of both companies appointed Bates Wells to support them when McKinsey and Company approached them about becoming part of their offering.

A cross departmental team led by Corporate M&A Partner, Stephen Callender, advised on the sale, which is expected to accelerate McKinsey's existing sustainability, risk and resilience capabilities, while also helping McKinsey's clients generate detailed company and business models that depict the impact of decarbonisation related to climate risk. The deal will see far more businesses able to address their impact on the climate than could previously have been reached by Vivid Economics and Planetrics alone. In acquiring these firms, McKinsey is showing that addressing climate change is critical to the future operating model of successful businesses.

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Responding to the pandemic for our clients and wider society

When the pandemic hit, we recognised that the wider charity and social enterprise sector was urgently in need of support and guidance. We moved quickly to prepare and distribute a variety of free resources to our own networks and beyond and have continued to do so as organisations adjust to the new normal.

Information hub: In the weeks before lockdown we put an information hub in place, publishing a weekly bulletin to all our subscribers, featuring the latest Covid-related updates on areas such as governance, employment, rent and premises issues, and guidance on contracts. We continued to update the hub in response to government changes and announcements during the pandemic.

This featured regular legal and policy updates, as well as links to other resources such as Covid-focused webinars, our new podcast series examining different aspects of the crisis, and more. This hub was the only law firm resource listed on the Gov.uk website for guidance for the charity sector.

Charity helpline: We recognised the need in the sector for prompt and specific advice. Our charity helpline offered free half-hour consultations to any charity in need of immediate guidance.

Decision tool: We launched a free decision tool for charities and social enterprises facing financial difficulties. After answering a short series of questions about their organisation, users were provided with a tailored guide outlining options available and signposting to further resources. The guide provided information on everything from cost-cutting measures to collaboration, merger and insolvency.

Partnering with membership organisations:

We focused on partnering with membership organisations during the crisis, to ensure our support reached as many charities and social enterprises as possible. We delivered free webinars and Q&A sessions to members of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, Professional Association of Research Networks, Social Enterprise UK, Heritage Alliance, Association of Chairs, and more. Several webinars had over 1,000 attendees.

We also supplied updates and resources to a huge variety of membership organisations to share on their own advice hubs.

Events: Webinars and virtual roundtables have been key to supporting our clients and networks. We hosted webinars on furlough, contracts and grants, Covid-related real estate issues, immigration in the pandemic, and managing cash flow, among others.

Fixed-fee offers: We understand that for organisations facing financial uncertainty, a fixed fee is reassuring. In response to the pandemic, we developed a number of fixed-fee offerings such as a Covid-19 Lease Review and a Covid-19 Rent Concession service.

Downloadable guides: We prepared a range of 'After Lockdown' PDF guides, to help charities transition into the next phase. The guides covered everything from trustee meetings to governance and solvency, to issues around reopening offices and managing space.

Community: Partnerships

Bates Wells was the first UK law firm to certify as a B Corp. We walk the walk and collaborate with others like Business Declares and B Lab to create positive impacts, to make business a force for good, and to address the key challenges of our time.

Our lawyers have drafted the Better Business Act and worked with the Law Society to produce the Practical Toolkit for Women in Law. This section sets out details of some of our key partnerships in 2020.

Practical Toolkit for Women in Law

Bates Wells and the Law Society launch the Practical Toolkit for Women in Law to address equality, opportunity and representation in the profession

Certified



Our B Corp score increases 10 points to

116.5

and we are recognised as best for the world in Governance

Better Business Act

72%

want to see business do better.

Bates Wells lawyers have been at the centre of drafting the proposed Act which would see a commitment to wider society and the environment embedded into the DNA of every UK business.

Business as a force for good

B Corp

We are immensely proud to be a B Corp. Our B Corp status helps us to keep pushing for continuous improvement in the way that we operate and encourages us to push those values down our supply chain, encouraging others to act in environmentally and socially sustainable ways. Being a B Corp helps us to articulate and keep sight of our values, which run through all our business decisions.

We are also looking at how we can support more purposeful businesses through our legal services. We wrote the legal test for B Corps in the UK and have helped all sorts of companies to adopt it. We now offer our clients a free B Corp Health Check to help them increase their impact and support them in developing purposeful business practices.

Despite going through our re-certification in 2020 amid the additional pressures of the pandemic and on a more challenging version of the B Impact Assessment, we were thrilled to increase our score to 116.5, well above the average for the UK professional services sector. We were also recognised as one of the **best B Corps in the world** for our governance.

Over B Corp month, in March 2021, we created a series of **guides for existing and aspiring B Corps** and we were a part of B Lab UK's recent article on **circular business practices**.

We hosted internal and external talks about being a B Corp and our Managing Partner, Martin Bunch, was interviewed by the **Green Elephant podcast**



Better Business Act

The Companies Act doesn't prevent purpose-driven business practice but it doesn't require it either. The **Better Business Act** aims to amend section 172 of the Companies Act to embed a commitment to wider society and the environment into the DNA of every UK business.

Bates Wells partner, Luke Fletcher, has been at the centre of drafting the proposed Act. He has worked with a range of external stakeholders including B Lab UK and the Institute of Directors to encourage support from business leaders. There are now approximately 700 companies signed up to the **Better Business Act campaign**, including innocent, John Lewis, Waitrose, Danone, Iceland and many other household names.

As it currently stands, the Companies Act requires directors to seek to benefit shareholders but does not enable directors to give weight to wider social or environmental concerns as important matters in their own right. This model no longer fits with most people's values or expectations of business. A May 2020 poll commissioned by B Lab UK showed that 72% of respondents believe business should have a legal responsibility to people and the planet. If the government were to adopt the proposed change it would mean that as an economy, we could really build back better from the pandemic on firm legal

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foundations and harness the power of business to reach our sustainability goals as a nation. We're proud that we have been involved in driving the call for this critical change.

Luke Fletcher explained the sense of urgency behind the campaign: *“The world is waking up to the scale and immediacy of the challenges presented by the climate and biodiversity crises. To turn the tanker of the global economy, we need structural reforms that change the very purpose of every business, and which embed a commitment to positive impact on the planet and people, alongside profit. The Better Business Act shows that this essential structural reform is possible and how it can be done. If we pass the Act, we might just be able to turn the corner in our collective fight against climate change.”*

Douglas Lamont from innocent drinks told us: *“Since innocent started, we've always sought to do business the right way – balancing our commercial ambitions with people and planet. And that dream still stands today. We want to show that business and values can thrive side by side, and to do this we need to lead by example. As Co-Chair of the Better Business Act, my role is to help businesses understand that they can deliver profit and shareholder value while being a force for good. The two aren't mutually exclusive.*

And now with G7 and COP26 taking place on our doorstep this year, and the pandemic forcing us to re-evaluate how we do business – passing the Act would be a huge win for the UK. We already have a reputation for leadership in corporate governance and right now is a moment to build on that. I would hope that the government seizes this opportunity to help drive positive change.

The Act is simply about creating a fairer and more sustainable future for all, not just shareholders. We know the impact on employees, the environment and our communities would be significant. By creating a clear legal framework, which I thank Luke Fletcher and the team at Bates Wells for leading on, we can make sure that company directors have as much responsibility for safeguarding employee rights and protecting the environment as they do for making profit – and that they are not just paying lip service to the idea.”



“To turn the tanker of the global economy, we need structural reforms that change the very purpose of every business, and which embed a commitment to positive impact on the planet and people, alongside profit. The Better Business Act shows that this essential structural reform is possible and how it can be done.”

Luke Fletcher, Partner, Bates Wells

Practical Toolkit for Women in Law

On International Women's Day, Bates Wells and the Law Society launched the **Practical Toolkit for Women in Law**. The toolkit gives an insight into the experiences and needs of women lawyers around the world and provides a series of practical actions, how-to guides, and initiatives to address equality, opportunity and representation in the profession. The Toolkit also provides a list of useful resources. The project was run by Lizette Robleto de Howarth (The Law Society) and Melanie Carter (Bates Wells) and was supported by a group of women lawyers from Bates Wells.

The project found that globally, women lawyers are prevented from achieving positions of leadership in the sector. Key concerns include unconscious bias, sexual harassment, unequal pay, lack of role models, returning to work after maternity leave or a career break, and the double burden of domestic and professional work. As well as sex discrimination, other factors that affect women's ability to progress include disability, long-term illness and being from minority ethnic backgrounds. The Toolkit identifies challenges and opportunities and offers accessible ways to address these. Through our work with the Law Society on the Toolkit, we hope to make a significant difference to the lives of women lawyers around the world.

We spoke to **Lizette Robleto de Howarth**, International Programme Manager, The Law Society, and report co-author: "My 2019 '**Advocating for Change**' report found that women were lacking practical steps to help them increase their career progression in the legal profession. The Practical Toolkit was launched in March 2021 as part of The Law Society's International Women's Day celebrations. It has been endorsed by several stakeholders including by the UNESCO Deputy Secretary General, Gabriella Ramos.

We wrote the Toolkit with the intention of it having a long shelf life, showcasing examples of best practice from around the world that are cost effective and can be easily replicated in different jurisdictions. It is a great tool for increasing gender equality in the legal sector. I am also delighted that we have been able to engage with Bates Wells to deliver this substantive piece of research for the benefit of the profession worldwide.

It showed a lot of commitment from Bates Wells and their people, especially Melanie, to have produced this important report under the very challenging circumstances of the pandemic. Pro bono contributions like that provided by Bates Wells will have a great impact around the world, especially in jurisdictions with limited resources."

We also spoke to **Melanie Carter**, Partner, and report co-author: "I got involved in the project because I have a lifelong commitment to women's issues. I wanted to support the work of the Law Society internationally as I'm very conscious that we have advantages in this country that aren't available for women lawyers in other jurisdictions. There is a crying need in some countries where there is almost no support whatsoever for women in our profession.

Doing the interviews with women around the world was hugely uplifting. We want the Toolkit to be taken off the shelf and used. That is fundamentally the most important thing. There is so much practical stuff in it, we hope it will lead to really positive outcomes."

Business Declares

Business Declares is a not-for-profit organisation that believes business has a major part to play in tackling the climate, ecological and social emergency. They exist to raise awareness of the imperative to accelerate action on these issues. They provide resources and run events to help their members and others to tackle the challenges head on.

In 2019 we formally recognised the climate crisis. We believe in making changes to how we operate as a business and a society to address the challenges that we face. We were very happy to get involved with Business Declares. We provided pro bono support to help them to set up in 2019 and we have partnered with them at various events since, including a panel discussion on the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill. We support their initiatives as they align so closely with our values, and they actively showcase initiatives that we are committed to, such as the Better Business Act. Together we are pushing for the real and lasting change needed to address the climate crisis.

Our membership of the network has been invaluable in helping us to address our climate aspirations because of the safe space Business Declares provides to its members to share experiences, challenges and solutions. We are proud to be part of the network and would encourage any organisation that wants to address the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis to find out more.

We spoke to **Samantha Cooper**, one of the Directors of Business Declares: “Business Declares was officially set up in September 2019. It came about as a response to the critical situation that we find ourselves in. We brought together a group of business leaders who wanted to collaborate to make

Our membership of the network has been invaluable in helping us to address our climate aspirations because of the safe space Business Declares provides to its members to share experiences, challenges and solutions.

a change because we see business as a critical element to address the challenges of the climate, biodiversity and social emergency. We all know that politics is driven by business, so we want to raise the voices of our members to push for the legislative, regulatory and societal changes needed to address the emergency.

We see our job as raising awareness within the business community of the severe challenges that we face and to help businesses to address them. As a group, our members collaborate to talk about the challenges of addressing the issue, to celebrate their achievements, and to share knowledge and experiences. We provide free resources to small businesses and signpost and collaborate with other climate activist organisations.

Bates Wells has been an important partner for us. They inspire others to join Business Declares by showing off our work and being supportive of our events either through their brilliant speakers or championing our advocacy efforts. They have really taken a lead on the climate and biodiversity emergency and demonstrated how a business can retain and attract talent by being very clear on its core values. It means that they can achieve more and have a bigger impact.”

LawWorks

We are working on a pilot pro bono project in partnership with **LawWorks** and international law firms Reed Smith and Morgan Lewis to support organisations with registering as charities. The project matches charity sector specialist lawyers at Bates Wells with a team of volunteer lawyers at either Reed Smith or Morgan Lewis who do not themselves specialise in the charity sector. Our lawyers give behind the scenes advice to empower the non-charity specialist volunteers help organisations with preparing governing documents, charitable objects and Charity Commission application forms. This means that we use our charity expertise in a more strategic way to benefit a greater number of early-stage charities with the support of the Reed Smith and Morgan Lewis teams. The project has worked with six organisations so far. We were delighted that it recently helped Lambeth Links (an LGBTQ+ community forum in Lambeth) and Soundcastle (a charity using music to connect communities, enhance wellbeing and reduce social isolation) to successfully register as charities.

Rachel Southern, Associate, said: *“We set up this project to maximise the number of new charities we can help in the process of registering with the Charity Commission. Partnering with Morgan Lewis and Reed Smith is a great way of increasing the number of new charities we can reach by allowing the Bates Wells volunteers to focus on the most technical charity law points. It is great to see exciting new charities benefiting from this support so that they can be empowered to go on and grow their amazing work”.*



“We set up this project to maximise the number of new charities we can help in the process of registering with the Charity Commission. Partnering with Morgan Lewis and Reed Smith is a great way of increasing the number of new charities we can reach by allowing the Bates Wells volunteers to focus on the most technical charity law points.”

Rachel Southern, Associate

Community: Wider society

We are committed to giving back to society both as a firm and individuals. Our people give pro bono legal advice to a wide range of organisations and are given time to take on volunteering and trustee roles to use their knowledge and experience outside of their work.

Pro Bono

In the last year more than 100 of our solicitors gave pro bono advice and support in areas that interest them

Volunteering

All our people are entitled to take up to 2 days per year for volunteering time

Volunteering and trustee roles

We firmly believe in the value of volunteering and holding trustee positions and we support our people to give back to society within their working hours. In the last year more than 100 of our solicitors gave pro bono advice and support in areas of interest to them. In addition to this, all our people are entitled to take two working days per year for volunteering activities.

We spoke to some of our people to find out what trustee and volunteering they do and why.



Keya Advani, trustee, CIVA: *“CIVA is an organisation that seeds and supports innovative ideas for solving social problems. It provides support to people who have an idea that they want to*

grow but don't have the network or infrastructure in place to do it. The support provided ranges from practical support (eg opening a bank account) to setting up organisations or providing mentoring and networking opportunities. A lot of my work involves advising charities and charity boards, so I wanted to have an opportunity to get involved. I really like CIVA's mission as a support umbrella. There is a real culture at Bates Wells of taking on trustee roles. It is completely normalised here and so there is a good network for support and advice. Taking on a trustee role gives a lot of meaning to my day job and helps me see how my advice can be practically applied.”



Clarissa Lyons, trustee, Cambridge House: *“I got involved with Cambridge House in 2018. It was particularly relevant to me because it tackles issues that I am passionate about and works*

in the community close to where I live. The charity fights poverty, social inequity and injustice. They provide a range of services including a law centre, advocacy services, and run programmes including on safer renting (to protect tenants who are victimised by criminal landlords) and on youth empowerment. As a trustee I help to guide the strategic direction of the charity – and to ensure that its work is carried out sustainably and effectively, in line with its vision. In the last year a lot of our work has involved responding to the challenges of Covid and working out how an organisation that had always been very much building based could operate effectively remotely. The charity and its users have adjusted well to this, everyone has responded creatively, and service users have still largely received the support they need, when they need it. The work that Cambridge House do is hugely important, and I enjoy being able to contribute to that. I feel that the work I as a trustee do is recognised and valued by the firm.”



Katie Exell, volunteer, FoodCycle: *“In the last year I supported FoodCycle as a check in and chat volunteer. Because of the pandemic, they could no longer run their community meals. They quickly*

switched to providing food parcels to service users, and volunteers like me called the service users each week to check that the food parcels had been received and to provide someone to chat to. I find FoodCycle a really lovely charity to be involved with. They adapted really well to the pandemic and it made me feel like I was doing something tangible to support the charity and the people using their service, even when we were quite limited in what we could do because of lockdown.

Working in the Charity & Social Enterprise team at Bates Wells, the importance of volunteering is at the forefront of my mind. There is so much scope to help in the sector and, in our team catch ups, we talk a lot about the volunteering people have got up to. Seeing my colleagues support projects that they care about encourages me to do the same. It's great that we are given space to go off and do things that we feel passionate about."



Suhan Rajkumar, volunteer, Covid

vaccines: "I've been giving the vaccine at mass vaccination centres in London. I have given about 200 jabs so far! I signed up online following a call for

volunteers by the **St Johns Ambulance**. It's an impressive system. I was trained in early January. The actual vaccinating is surprisingly straightforward. It's been amazing to see how excited people are to receive the vaccine, particularly in the first stages of the roll out where it was mostly people who had been shielding for almost a year. It has been a really rewarding way to fill the time through lockdown."



Grace Chamberlain, volunteer, The

Social Mobility Foundation: "I volunteer as a mentor for the **Social Mobility Foundation**, a charity that aims to make a practical improvement in social

mobility for young people by providing opportunities and networks of support for 16–17 year olds who can't get this from their schools or families. Research suggests that social mobility is on the decline in Britain and I want to contribute to a cause that ensures a leg-up is offered to as many young adults as possible. I really enjoy how direct the mentor/mentee relationship is – I like to think that I'm helping an intelligent young person gain their full potential."

"There is a real culture at Bates Wells of taking on trustee roles. It is completely normalised here and so there is a good network for support and advice. Taking on a trustee role gives a lot of meaning to my day job and helps me see how my advice can be practically applied."

Keya Advani, trustee, CIVA

Environment

We see the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis as one of the most critical problems facing our society. We are committed to actively reducing our impact on the environment and use our influence to drive positive social change to reduce the impact of the crisis.

We have done a lot of work over many years to directly reduce our carbon emissions as far as possible. By balancing our residual emissions, we achieved net zero in 2019. We have also significantly reduced our use of single-use plastics and we're asking our major suppliers to explain how they are addressing the crisis. Our workplace pension now includes an option with a sustainable portfolio and our lawyers are working with the Chancery Lane Project to draft contract clauses that focus on our planet over the coming year. We want others to take the steps we are taking and to inspire us to do more, so that together we can make even more of a difference.

CO₂

We've been carbon net zero since 2019

We now measure and balance our emissions from commuting to work and working from home to reduce our impact further.

"As a law firm, the impact we ourselves can have, just by reducing our emissions, is quite small. Our main impact is as an influencer, because if we can show what we can do, other law and professional services firms can be encouraged to join us."

Lawrie Simanowitz, Chair of the Climate Programme's People and Practice group

Swapping your pension can cut your carbon emissions by 21 times more than going veggie, giving up flying and switching energy provider, that's why our people now have access to a sustainable workplace pension

Climate Programme

When we formally recognised the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis in 2019, we set up a Climate Programme to help us to deliver the commitments we made. In January 2021 we published our first **Climate Report** which sets out our progress against our commitments to:

- **decrease our carbon emissions**, reaching net zero carbon in 2019;
- **take the crisis into account** in developing our firm's strategy;
- **use our expertise as lawyers** to address the crisis;
- **engage our people** to live in climate friendly ways; and
- **collaborate with others** to amplify our impact.

We spoke to **Lawrie Simanowitz**, Chair of the Climate Programme's People and Practice group about what they have been up to: *"There is a commitment across the firm and we are making real practical changes across the board. Over the last*



year we've got more sophisticated about measuring our emissions. We are always looking at other ways to reduce our environmental impact and we are talking to our suppliers about how they reduce their emissions too.

The biggest single thing anyone can do to support the environment is to switch their pension to a sustainable one, so we were very keen to make a sustainable option available to our people. We worked with our pension provider, Aviva (who it turns out have a really sustainable option in place) and asked them to make it easy for staff to make the switch. Some pioneers have already done it and we will keep supporting others to do so.

As lawyers we're closely involved with the Chancery Lane Project who are developing precedents to be used in all types of contracts to reduce emissions to zero. Our lawyers are also involved in looking at how charity trustees can be enabled to take environmental considerations into account when investing funds and reserves. As a law firm, the impact we ourselves can have, just by reducing our emissions, is quite small. Our main impact is as an influencer, because if we can show what we can do, other law and professional services firms can be encouraged to join us."

"There is a commitment to change across the firm and we are making real practical changes across the board. Over the last year we've got more sophisticated about measuring our emissions. We are always looking at other ways to reduce our environmental impact and we are talking to our suppliers about how they reduce their emissions too."

Lawrie Simanowitz, Chair of the Climate Programme's People and Practice group

Environmental facts and figures

Since 2015 we have taken a range of steps to reduce our environmental impact:

- encouraging our landlord to **switch to a renewable energy tariff**;
- adopting a **procurement policy that favours more sustainable suppliers**;
- **zero waste to landfill policy** in the building, which we supplement by recycling things like batteries, crisp packets and contact lenses;
- **reducing our printing overall** while offsetting any that we do through the **Print ReLeaf** scheme. Since June 2019, 250 trees have been planted to offset our printing;
- **all the paper we buy is recycled**. This reduces deforestation; and energy use in production is reduced by 33%, wastewater by 49% and CO2 emissions by 37% when compared to paper that is not from recycled sources;
- **deliveries from our main suppliers are limited to twice a week**, reducing the emissions from transport;
- we have switched to **reusable glass milk bottles** (saving around 500 plastic bottles a month) and we're looking at dairy-free alternatives;
- **our internal catering is now vegetarian** by default, we expect this to result in a 25% reduction in emissions from food when we return to the office;
- we **encourage sustainable public transport**, support people to cycle to work and use cycle couriers as much as possible;
- we signed up to the **Climate Perks** scheme and hope our people will be able to use this once foreign travel restrictions are eased;
- we send our spent coffee grounds to be turned into **coffee logs**;
- we use a **plumbed drinking water service** meaning that we don't buy in any bottled water; and
- we have bought automated hand sanitiser stations that are refilled from bulk bottles, **reducing the need for single-use plastic sanitiser bottles**.

250 trees

have been planted to offset our printing since June 2019.

500

plastic milk bottles are saved per month by switching to reusable glass milk bottles and we're looking at dairy-free alternatives.

Our internal catering is now vegetarian by default, we expect this to result in a

25% reduction

in emissions from food when we return to the office.

Net Zero

We became carbon net zero in 2019 in relation to Scope 1 and Scope 2 – and all Scope 3 emissions that we can measure. We were already measuring, reducing and balancing some of our Scope 3 emissions prior to 2019. The biggest challenge was identifying other Scope 3 emissions and how to measure them. We were able to work out an accurate calculation of the emissions from commuting to work via a firm-wide survey for 2019; for 2020 we worked with fellow B Corp **Green Element** to make sure we could capture emissions produced by home working in the most meaningful way. In 2018 we saw our carbon usage drop to 168 tonnes of CO2. By adding in our people’s commutes to work, our total carbon outlay increased to 265.4 tonnes of CO2 in 2019 and commuting represented 34% of all emissions. You can find out more in our **carbon footprint report**.

For the 2019 calendar year we worked with fellow B Corp **Ecosphere+** to balance our emissions through their Sumatra Merang Peatland project. We’re still working on the solution for 2020’s emissions and will report on that in our 2021 Climate Report.

We spoke to **Russell Owen**, Facilities Manager, and **James Hooley**, Facilities Assistant, about the challenges of measuring our carbon footprint: *“When we decided to go for net zero emissions in 2019, identifying the Scope 3 emissions to measure was quite challenging – trying to measure all the impact that you have is hard to get your head around. You have to have strength and support from senior managers to take on the decision to measure more emissions. The more you measure, the more transparent and genuine your actions are. And by measuring more, we can be clearer about what else we can reduce. Knowing that we have the support of the Management Board to go further and calculate as much as possible really helps.*

On the commuting survey we asked people to think about whether they could make any changes to their commute or part of it – by asking that question we are raising awareness and encouraging positive change. Going forward we are looking to reduce the amount of air travel that we do, and hopefully the year that we’ve just had will support a reduction in that. A lot of good things have come out of this year from a carbon footprint perspective, and we need to keep that up when things go back to normal as much as possible.”



“When we decided to go for net zero emissions in 2019, identifying the Scope 3 emissions to measure was quite challenging – trying to measure all the impact that you have is hard to get your head around. You have to have strength and support from senior managers to take on the decision to measure more emissions. The more you measure, the more transparent and genuine your actions are.

Russell Owen, Facilities Manager

Plastic reduction in our operations

With the help of our Climate Programme, we set a target in 2020 to reduce the single use plastics that we buy. We looked at the main catering, cleaning and stationery supplies that we purchase and searched for environmentally sustainable alternatives.

We're proud to say that in these three areas we have now reduced single-use plastics by 80% overall. We're looking forward to seeing how this works out once people start coming back into the office and using the new products regularly.

Cleaning products: 70% of our core list of cleaning items have now been switched over to more sustainable products. The remaining 30% includes items like gloves and compactor bags, which could not be changed either for health and safety reasons or because of our landlord's waste requirements. We now use washable sponges and cloths from B Corp, Full Circle; dilutable drops with bottles for life for our cleaning sprays; and plastic free dishwasher tablets. When we renovated our toilets in 2020, we made sure that we could do away with the need for plastic inserts in our toilet rolls, saving around 550 of these each month.

Stationery: 75% of our core list has been changed to more sustainable products. The remaining 25% are items difficult to replace – such as glue sticks and rubber bands – but we are always looking for alternatives. For now, where a suitable alternative isn't available, we buy those with the best green credentials. We reduced the number of our stationery deliveries and buy in bulk where we can, reducing carbon emissions further.

Catering: 86% of our core list has been switched to plastic free products including plastic free teabags from **Clipper**, and crisps in fully compostable bags from **Two Farmers**. We recycle or reuse all the packaging from the remaining items that we haven't yet found an alternative for.

70%

of our core list of cleaning items have now been switched over to more sustainable products.

75%

of our core stationery items have been replaced with more sustainable alternatives.

86%

of our core catering list has been switched to plastic free products including plastic free teabags.

Addressing our supply chain

As a B Corp we aim to encourage our suppliers to adopt our social and environmental aspirations. We regularly purchase from other B Corps and social enterprises and have started to review our supplier relationships, developing a supplier code of conduct and questionnaire. These highlight issues that we are committed to and ask our suppliers to be open with us on their position on things like a living wage, climate change and diversity and inclusion.

Over the last year we have started new commercial relationships with two B Corps, Cheeky Panda and Reconome, and we already buy from many others.

Reconome

Reconome is on a mission to end electronic waste. They support companies in the UK to increase the sustainability of IT hardware. They divert redundant equipment from landfill with four out of five devices that they receive being repaired and redeployed. We discovered Reconome when they announced their B Corp status in early 2020 and approached them to see how we could work together to support our people with their IT needs while working from home. In the 10 months since that initial contact, we purchased 81 devices and cables from Reconome, which has resulted in 99kg of refurbished IT equipment being reused and helped avoid 10,175 kg of CO2 from being emitted (462 trees would be needed to prevent the same amount of CO2 from entering the atmosphere over the course of a year).



99kg
 refurbished IT equipment
 reused avoided 10,175kg of
 CO2 emissions

**Emissions 65% lower than
 virgin paper and 31% lower
 than comparable recycled
 paper by switching to
 bamboo products**

Cheeky Panda



We began working with **Cheeky Panda** in February 2020. We work hard to reduce our impact on the environment so being able to source sustainable toilet rolls, paper towels and wipes was a huge win for us. While we bought far fewer of these products than we would expect to in a normal year, we are delighted that carbon emissions from the items we have purchased are 65% lower than they would have been if we had purchased virgin tree-pulp based products, and 31% lower than if we had bought recycled paper products. Cheeky Panda became the world's first carbon balanced tissue company in 2017. This means that every item we purchase from them is not only better for the environment, it also reduces biodiversity loss and supports the World Land Trust in their vital work protecting and restoring the world's tropical rainforests.

Supporting our people to live in climate friendly ways

Sustainable Pensions

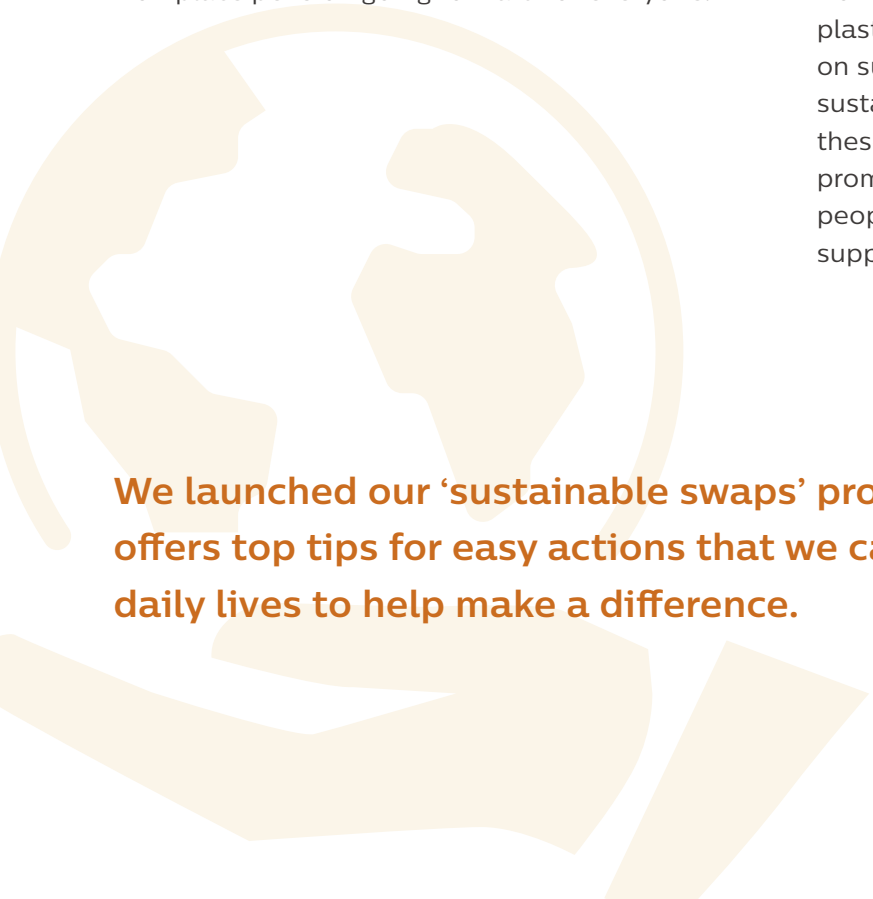
Making the switch to a more sustainable pension fund is probably the most powerful thing you can do to protect the planet. It can cut your carbon emissions by **21 times** more than becoming a vegetarian, giving up flying or switching energy provider. When we established our Climate Programme, we were keen to be able to offer our people a more sustainable alternative to the existing default workplace pension. We worked with **Aviva** to understand what is available and how to make this an option for our people. In 2020 we were delighted to be able to add such a fund to pension options for all employees who receive a workplace pension. Since then, we have been working with experts including **EQ Investors** and Aviva to help our people understand the risks and benefits of switching to the sustainable option so they can make an informed choice. We are working towards making this the default fund for our new joiners and are committed to consulting with our colleagues about making this our default workplace pension going forward for everyone.

Communicating our actions and encouraging others to make sustainable choices

We want to do more to inform our people about our actions and help them lead more environmentally sustainable lifestyles.

To help us achieve this, we launched our 'sustainable swaps' programme, which offers top tips for easy actions that we can take in our daily lives to help make a difference. We have shared resources with our people on how to work from home in a more sustainable way – such as buying sustainable equipment and sharing information about green energy suppliers. We keep our people regularly engaged and informed through internal updates and a specific Climate Programme section in our fortnightly newsletter. Our people are regularly invited to propose new ideas and initiatives.

To support our work, we have run internal talks on: the climate emergency and lessons learned from the pandemic (**with Green Alliance**); on plastic reduction (**with The Rubbish Project**); on sustainable banking (**with Triodos**); and on sustainable pensions (**with EQ Investors**). With these educational talks and the work we do to promote sustainable swaps we aim to help our people take the steps that are right for them to support the environment.



We launched our 'sustainable swaps' programme, which offers top tips for easy actions that we can take in our daily lives to help make a difference.

People

Our values are pivotal to us, they shape our decisions and the way we live and work. We are people people. We want to have a positive impact on our people because they are our greatest asset. By supporting them, they can have a positive impact on others.

Over the last 12 months we have done a lot of work on equality and diversity. In this section we talk about the action we are taking to make sure that Bates Wells is as inclusive as possible and how we have navigated the pandemic while keeping a strong sense of our community.

We also talk about our work with local schools and the Sutton Trust to help increase access to professional jobs for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

We are committed to making a positive change for our people and society more widely through our active Diversity and Inclusion Forum.

Social Mobility

We partner with The Sutton Trust and Morpeth School to widen access to professional services firms and we're looking at how our recruitment can support those from underrepresented groups.

RISE:

Working together to address racism in our society and representation in our firm.

"To make an impact, we all have to work together from a place of understanding and a belief in change."

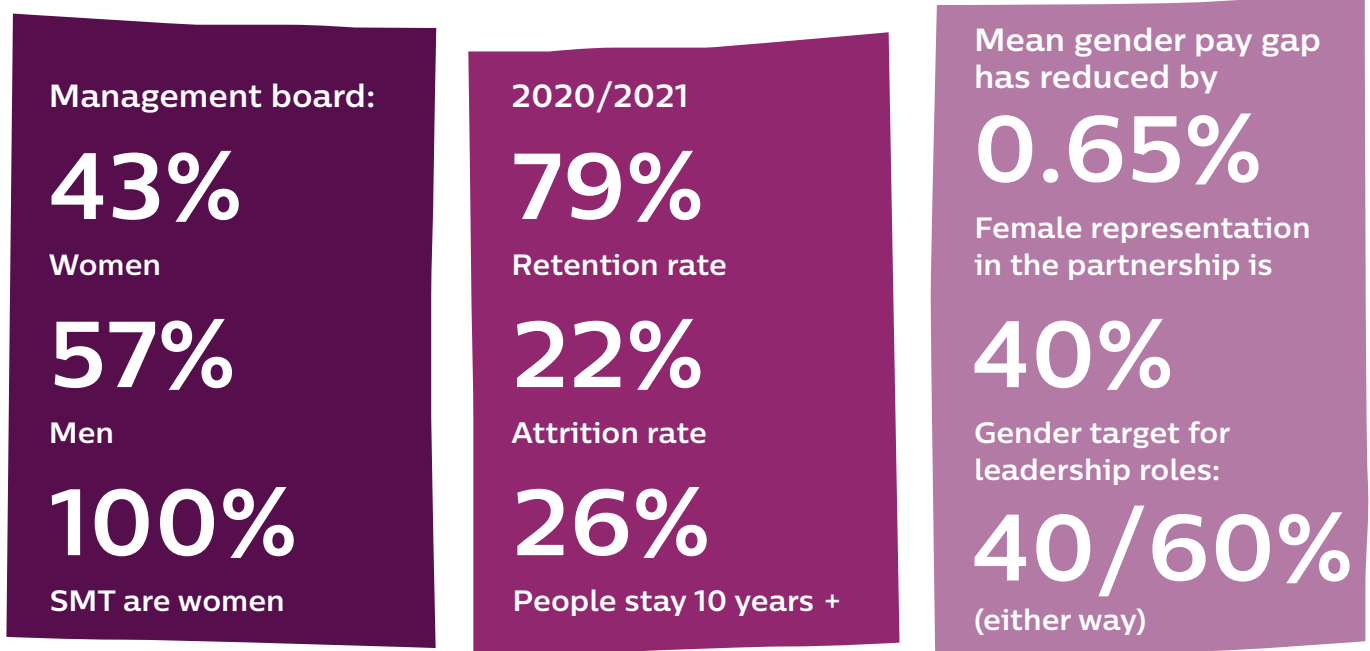
Zara Bartels, Senior Business Improvement Manager

Stats and stuff

We strive to create an inclusive workplace with a richness of diversity. We want all our people to feel safe, happy and confident that they can reach their full potential at Bates Wells. We started a benchmarking exercise in February 2021 to help us understand our demographics in greater detail and to come up with strategies for the development and progression of all our people, particularly women and colleagues who are Black or from underrepresented groups¹. We have begun to monitor our talent pipeline with both a gender and ethnicity lens. Our partners have set a 40:60% gender target (either way) for our leadership roles and within our partnership as a whole from April 2021. To ensure we can have a fair and accessible process for all, we want to allow the targets to be flexible in either direction, while never dropping below a good representation of both men and women. At the moment, our management board is made up of 43% women; 57% men and our senior management team is 100% women.

Our **mean gender pay gap** has reduced by 0.65% to 10.83%. In 2020 67% of our promotions to Associate and Senior Associate roles went to women. Female representation in the partnership is 40%, although we have more women in the firm overall. While 40% is very strong for a City law firm, we continue to promote women into the partnership; we want to ensure that both women and men are well represented in our most senior roles. Now the targets have been agreed, our next step is to focus on how we implement and monitor their impact over the next three years.

Over 2020/2021 our staff retention rate was 79% and our attrition rate was 22%, while 26% of our people have been with the firm for 10+ years. We made 19 internal promotions in January 2021. Of those, 47% of promoted people were women, 53% were men and 16% of promotions went to colleagues who are Black or from underrepresented groups.



¹ We recognise that people have strong views about how to present the richness of people’s backgrounds in a meaningful way. We are conscious of the language we use and strive to be representative and considered. Where presenting statistics that are from outside our firm, we continue to use the term BAME.

Demographics

Our demographics (based on internal survey responses from February 2021):

- Our firm’s average age at 31 March 2021 was 39.10 and 25% of our people are aged 25–44;
- 68% of us are women and 32% are men;
- 15% of our people identify as LGBTQ+;
- 4% of our people reported having a disability;
- 83% of our people identify as white; 82% were born in the UK and 7% of those are first-generation born in the UK; 27% of our colleagues consider themselves to be Black or from underrepresented groups;
- 64% of our people attended a state school and 23% attended a fee-paying school, while 9% were eligible for free school meals when they were young;
- 84% of our people are primary carers.

Solicitors Regulation Authority data collected in Summer 2019 shows that on average in UK law firms, 49% are women, 21% are from Black or Ethnic Minority backgrounds, 3% are disabled and 43% have caring responsibilities.

According to the 2011 Census 86% of the UK population was white and 14% Black or Ethnic Minorities while in London 45% consider themselves to be white and 40% identify as Black or Ethnic Minorities.

We’re using this data to work out how to address imbalances and make our firm more representative.

Firm wide we are:

68%

Women

32%

Men

39.10

Average age

15%

identify as LGBTQ+

4%

have a disability

84%

of our people are primary carers

Firm wide:

64%

attended a state school while 9% were eligible for free school meals when they were young.

23%

attended a fee-paying school.

Diversity and inclusion

Our Diversity and Inclusion Forum (DIF) help design our approach to making our firm more inclusive and they lead on key projects. Over the last year we have placed a particular emphasis on race because we are committed to stopping all forms of racism and changing the infrastructure that upholds it. For us this starts with our leaders who are all taking part in an upward (reverse) mentoring scheme. At the same time, our colleagues have developed an Allyship Guide and we are educating ourselves and our people as part of a meaningful and long-term strategy to tackle racism.

We are seeking to increase representation in our firm of Black people and People of Colour and we are targeting recruitment to attract diverse talent while also focusing on retaining our people. We have signed up to the **Race Fairness Commitment** to support more equitable recruitment, the **Race at Work Charter**, the Law Society’s **Diversity and Inclusion Charter** and we were the first law firm to sign up to the **Halo Code**.

RISE

RISE is a relatively new group within our Diversity and Inclusion Forum that is dedicated to ensuring a welcoming and supportive environment for current and future colleagues that are Black or People of Colour here at Bates Wells.

We spoke to **Zara Bartels**, Senior Business Improvement Manager, about her work to help the firm tackle racism head on and on setting up RISE: “RISE was born from my cathartic response to the George Floyd murder and subsequent uprisings

and spotlight on living while Black; writing a post on LinkedIn on being Black in the professional space, and spending your life navigating how you are expected to behave versus who you are and the value that you bring by being yourself.

My blog post was read by our COO, she reached out and we talked. Our discussions clarified that focus and a meaningful approach was needed to make the firm feel welcoming and truly inclusive for Black people and People of Colour. Bates Wells is filled with good people who want to be better, which helped my decision to take on the challenge of setting up RISE.

RISE is a movement, I lead on the projects collaborating with departments and colleagues or lend my observations/knowledge to other activities in the firm. As RISE takes a project-based approach, there isn’t a group membership but rather a flexible working group to facilitate a wider engagement in the firm. People can work on specific projects that interest them, and attend meetings that are focused on that workstream. The focus is on the layered and emotional topics of allyship and racism. To make an impact, we all have to work together from a place of understanding and a belief in change.

Bates Wells has started to get its house in order with self-reflection and by addressing the issues we’ve identified, by listening, talking and observing. A lot of our current work is policy based to ensure we have the infrastructure to support our intentions and objectives, along with developing a programme that will provide continuous focus and learning for our team. The goal is that this work becomes part of the fabric of Bates Wells and hopefully something that people will remember us for and aspire to imitate. However we get there, the work must be done and we are ready to make a more equality focused and empathetic workplace.”



“To make an impact, we all have to work together from a place of understanding and a belief in change.”

Zara Bartels, Senior Business Improvement Manager

Social mobility

We want to make sure that people from all backgrounds can have access to the same opportunities. We have a long-standing relationship with Sutton Trust and their **Pathways to Law programme**. As part of that, each year we host Y12 students for a week-long work experience programme. In 2021 we hosted this as a wholly virtual scheme for the first time due to lockdown, which had the added benefit of allowing students from across the country to participate. We also work with Sutton Trust throughout the year on standalone events such as delivering sessions for their 2020 virtual summer conference scheme. Another partner is Morpeth School in Tower Hamlets. Normally we host their students for workshops and work experience. This year we prepared a video for their Meet the Professionals assembly.

We recognise that there is a lot more that we could be doing to make a difference. We have committed to making our first submission to the Social Mobility Index in 2021 to help us identify more ways to champion social mobility. We have also set up a new group as part of our Diversity and Inclusion Forum looking at recruitment, to drive access to jobs at Bates Wells from underrepresented groups. Where appropriate, we also recruit apprentices to widen access to professional services firms.

Destiny Haastrup is an apprentice in our Facilities Team who joined us from our partner, Morpeth School, in November 2019: *“I wasn’t enjoying my A level course and felt more passionate about getting out into the real world to get experience doing something hands on. I didn’t see myself in further education and didn’t want to follow the crowd. I never thought I would work in a law firm because I didn’t know that there were any roles for people that aren’t lawyers.*

When I got here all my beliefs about what working in a City law firm would be like were broken because everyone worked together. Everyone is so friendly and welcoming here. My team are really supportive and approachable. I’ve become more confident that I can work to the team’s standards, developed my communication skills, and I trust myself to do things more independently now. If someone I knew was thinking about an apprenticeship, I would tell them not to think twice. It is literally the best opportunity I’ve ever had because you get to work in a real environment and learn. It gives you a better insight into how life would actually be beyond studying.”



We are people people

Wellbeing and our response to the pandemic

Our culture and one firm ethos is hugely important to us. In response to the first lockdown we very quickly introduced Zoom and a weekly all-firm Town Hall led by our Managing Partner and COO. We also developed several wellbeing initiatives, dedicated wellbeing weeks and activities, and regularly surveyed our people to gauge how they were doing and what support they need from us.

We introduced Microsoft Teams to help people regain that sense of day-to-day togetherness and community with their peers, and we ran events ranging from quizzes and virtual kitchens to a virtual Christmas Choir and Christmas party. In the background to all this, our Facilities team volunteered to remain in the office and worked tirelessly to maintain normal operations and to make the office safe for those who needed it once we were allowed to use it again.

Employee Forum

Established in 2015, our active Employee Forum is made up of a representative group of staff from across the firm. It is an essential part of our B Corp status to give our employees a voice in the running of the firm, increasing transparency and widening decision-making. Our Employee Forum acts as a sounding board between employees and the management team and is regularly asked to consult or gather feedback on proposals. They also collate suggestions, concerns and ideas from staff.

In 2020 we reviewed the Forum to make it even more efficient and representative of our people. Now every group of employees is represented and annual elections are held. During the pandemic the Forum adjusted its usual operations to assist the firm in managing our response to the crisis. This included collating questions for the Management Board to address in their weekly broadcasts and passing on concerns expressed by staff.

Ben Thomas, Chair of the Employee Forum, explains: *“The Forum is a safe space for positive discussion. It is full of really proactive people. We have been heavily involved in helping the firm respond to the pandemic over the last year. For 2021 we are working with HR on what positives we should keep from our response to the pandemic and we’re looking forward to getting back to usual business including coming up with environmental initiatives and feeding into plans for social events.”*

Escape the City

We were really proud to be named as one of **Escape the City’s top 100 organisations to escape to in 2021** (out of more than 15,000 nominated companies). We got an average employee rating of 9.5 out of 10 and an overall escape score of 93. Escape the City described us as: *“a law firm that is doing things differently... Bates Wells not only shares their values outwardly, but also lives them every day within their organisation. They’re a law firm for people creating positive impact, working with many purposeful organisations and helping to show that traditional industries can be disruptive and impactful with the right leaders at the helm.”*



“a law firm that is doing things differently... Bates Wells not only shares their values outwardly, but also lives them every day within their organisation.”

Escape the City

Trainee Recruitment

Each year we recruit six trainee solicitors to join the firm through vacation schemes and training contract applications. In August 2020 we were pleased to welcome six new trainees to the firm, albeit virtually. To help them deal with the challenges of starting a training contract remotely we implemented a dual supervision system. This, as well as a buddying system, means that each trainee is given a range of contact points to help with matter supervision and general check-ins.

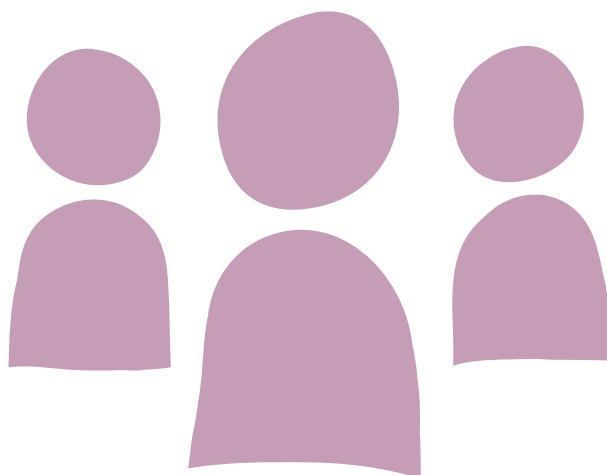
Because of the pandemic we decided to set up virtual vacation schemes and assessment days. We reduced the length of the vacation schemes to one week and made sure that the programme was full, that meaningful tasks were set and that the people taking part were able to get a good sense of what it would be like to work at Bates Wells.

Francesca Evans, Recruitment & Trainee Development Manager, said: *“Converting in-person schemes to virtual offerings was important to be true to our values. We had a number of candidates with vacation scheme offers who had devoted a significant amount of time in the recruitment process, so we did not want to just cancel our schemes.*

Feedback from candidates about the scheme was excellent, although all were disappointed not to be in the office (as I was). The schemes were a great way to get to know candidates and for them to explore us more, and I am delighted that we were able to proceed with them. I am really proud of all that we achieved last year with virtual recruitment, which has stood us in good stead this year as we have had to implement virtual vacation schemes again due to ongoing remote working”.

We spoke to **Raveena Rao** (2022 training contract) about her experience of the virtual vacation scheme and why she decided to apply to do her training contract here: *“When I arrived on the virtual vacation scheme I was pleasantly surprised. I felt that it really showed Bates Wells’ true character to go ahead and keep communicating with students when other vacation schemes were getting cancelled.*

Everyone at the firm was so friendly and approachable. The scheme gave us a good insight into the different aspects of the firm and we had the opportunity to work across the various areas of the practice as well as finding out about the business teams. The firm encouraged us to be friendly and get to know each other, they emphasised that the firm was more about collaboration than putting us against each other. My conversations with existing trainees were encouraging as they showed that there would be meaningful work as part of a training contract here. I applied to do my training contract at Bates Wells because I think the firm is at the top of its game across a range of sectors”.



Conclusion

There is no doubt that this has been an extraordinary year. However, this isn't all about the pandemic. For us, the purpose of producing this report is to act as a checklist to make sure that we are continuing to meet the challenges we have set for ourselves: to use the impact of law as a force for good within our communities; to monitor and change our impact on the environment; and to create a positive impact for our people.

Whether this has been reflected in a ground-breaking legal decision, our pro-bono work or our commitment to create the best workplace, this last year has given us the opportunity to use our expertise to make a real difference to society. We are grateful for the opportunities that we have to partner with others to amplify our efforts and we will always do what we can to help those that need our support.

We are not a firm that stands still. As we said in the introduction, this report is here to draw a line from which we can assess progress and we are already looking ahead at the work still to be done to address social and racial equality, the climate crisis and the need to make business a force for good. We will continue to support our clients and those who need our expertise.

We are already working on new initiatives with our clients and wider communities that will have a positive effect on the lives of others, and we hope that our work with the Better Business Act will continue to drive others towards a more responsible, sustainable and fair workplace.

Addressing the climate emergency is an area where there is more to do, and we are up for the challenge. We are taking time to figure out how we can build on the work we are already doing internally and our support of groups like the Chancery Lane Project to help our clients and others react to the climate crisis proactively.

We have clear aspirations to make our firm more inclusive and equal. We are addressing the challenges by partnering with other organisations that can share their expertise, while also drawing on the knowledge and experience of our staff. We are looking at our policies and systems, addressing recruitment and educating ourselves so that we can do more in this area next year.

We look forward to reporting back next year with an update on our progress on this journey to make a real difference to our communities, our planet and our people.



Sally Procopis
Chief Operating
Officer

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.