

Supporting our clients, our people and the planet

BATES WELLS IMPACT REPORT
2025



Contents

- 3 Introduction
Erica Crump, Managing Partner
- 4 Highlights from the last year
10 years as a B Corp
- 6 Helping bring about meaningful change
- 8 Fairer, more flexible funding
- 10 Using the law to promote sustainability
Supporting our natural ecosystems
- 12 A better way of doing business
Giving back
Reducing the impact of our operations
Building a more diverse, equitable and inclusive firm
- 18 Governance
- 19 Conclusion
Sally Procopis, Chief Operating Officer

Introduction

We've spent time this year reflecting on two core aspects of our firm: the articulation of our values and our strategic goals for the next five years.

What really stood out for me in each of these projects was how united Bates Wells people are in pursuing our purpose. This comes across in our desire to be the best type of business that we can be – whether through improving our operational impact, improving our sustainability or setting challenging targets to build a more diverse, equitable and inclusive firm. It is also evident in our motivation to help the broader business community join us on this journey to create positive impact.

Our refreshed values – pioneers at heart; champion each other; and act with conscience – are a reflection of who we are (and want to be) and how we strive to use the law as a force for good. Our strategic goals further reflect this. We are here to support a broad range of organisations, including charities and purposeful businesses, often helping them to be better and bolder in their choices.

I am continually impressed at how our people help tackle some of the most important crises of our generation. Whether being at the forefront of helping organisations campaign effectively, through our work on the future of fashion, or helping to challenge cuts to overseas aid, we continue to push for change.

And I am grateful to be at the helm of a commercial organisation that has reacted to changes in the global status quo over the past year, pushed back at times, and demonstrated that we will not compromise on our principles.

Being challenged and judged by our peers is a critical part of our journey and we use this as a key part of our benchmarking. It's easy to say that we will do more each year to create positive impact, it's harder to prove that we do. In the past year, we became the highest scoring global B Corp law firm after our recertification in August 2024, and the trophy shelf is getting crowded with five new awards for our sustainability and our equality, diversity and inclusion achievements. We are committed to being reflective, setting ourselves new challenges and reporting back on our progress.

Please do get in touch if anything in this report makes you question why or how we do what we do. We'd love to hear from you.



Erica Crump
Managing Partner

Highlights from the last year

Award-winning

It has been a golden year for Bates Wells. Our purpose and impact programmes have been recognised with a series of awards

- Best Environmental/Sustainability Strategy – Legal 500
- Best Social Mobility Initiative – People in law
- Best Sustainability Strategy – The Lawyer
- Award for Sustainability – LexisNexis
- B Corp of the Year – edie

New leadership

Earlier this year, Erica Crump took over from Martin Bunch as our Managing Partner. Under Erica's leadership, we begin a new phase in our mission to be a successful, sustainable and responsible law firm. Erica will continue her successful practice advising some of the biggest names in the culture and creative sectors, as well as being a trustee for Shakespeare's Globe, Stone Nest and Unitas; and supporting initiatives and membership bodies in the charity and culture sectors. Having lived our values since joining Bates Wells as a trainee, Erica exemplifies what makes Bates Wells such a special firm.

Raising the bar for B Corps

In 2024, we became the highest-scoring B Corp law firm in the world. The B Corp ethos is built on continuous improvement, and we are already working to embed and deliver on the new B Lab standards, as we continue to support **B Lab UK** and our fellow B Corps.

Working to bring change

At a time when it feels as though values are coming under attack, it is more important than ever that charities and campaign groups have a voice. We have been supporting groups such as the **Better Business Act**, **Fair Game**, **Fashion Declares** and **ONE Campaign** to engage with policy, legislation and government decisions.

Fairer, more flexible funding

We reported last year on the Equalising Deal Terms project, which aims to address power imbalances between funders and charities or social enterprises that receive funding. This year, we have worked with organisations to embed those principles into transactions, and have supported a range of other clients using finance for social good.

Supporting our natural ecosystems

Building on the work we have been doing in recent years, we have been supporting on land recovery, high-integrity carbon credits and empowering local communities to become custodians for their natural assets.

Reducing the impact of our operations

Our significant investment this year in a major office lighting upgrade project is just one way that we are looking to further cut our emissions and remain on track to hit our near-term, science-based target.

Building a more diverse, equitable and inclusive firm

We are proud of the open and inclusive culture that we have built together as a firm. At the same time, we recognise the challenges that the legal profession faces in improving diversity and social mobility. Our solicitor apprentice scheme and our active Diversity & Inclusion Forum networks are helping us to break down barriers and encourage more under-represented groups to become part of our firm.

Ten years as a B Corp

Since our firm was founded in 1970, we have always worked to support more equitable, sustainable and purpose-driven ways of doing business. We worked with the government to design and introduce the Community Interest Company vehicle. We have helped pioneer fairer, more flexible models for funding (as we discuss below). And for the past decade, we have supported the UK B Corp movement as it has become the largest B Corp community in the world.

Our B Corp journey

In 2015, we became the first UK law firm to certify as a B Corp. Although we were seen as an outlier in the legal market at the time, the decision to commit to a triple bottom line (people, profit and planet) always felt natural for us.

For the past 10 years, we have embraced the challenge for B Corps of continuously improving: reducing our environmental impact, doing more to support our people and working harder to create positive change in our communities and the wider society.

In our last assessment, in 2024, our B Impact Score increased from 116 to 140.2, making us the highest-scoring B Corp law firm in the world. We are incredibly proud of this, and the hard work that went into achieving it.

Supporting B Lab UK

We are also proud to have supported **B Lab UK** with its formation in 2015 and our partners have continued to serve on its board ever since.

Earlier this year, Bates Wells Partner, Louise Harman was appointed as Vice Chair of B Lab UK's Board of Trustees. Louise has served on B Lab UK's board for nearly five years, following on from Luke Fletcher, and stepped into the Vice Chair role to support Mary Johnstone-Louis, Chair of the Board.

In addition, Martin Bunch, a partner in the firm and our former Managing Partner, was elected this year to be the Vice Chair of the Board of B Lab Global. B Lab Global is the body that is introducing the new

B Corp standards and certification process and is organising a closer integration of the B Lab network across the 49 countries in which B Corps operate.

Updating the legal requirement

A key tenet of B Corp certification is amending the business constitutional document to include the 'Legal Requirement': standard form wording that sets out the B Corp purposes, providing the lens of multi-stakeholder governance for decision making by the board. This provides a legal basis to allow directors to consider all stakeholders, not just shareholders, when making decisions and protects the company's mission and values when there are changes in shareholding or leadership.

This past year, we acted for B Lab UK to update the Legal Requirement wording and its supporting guidance, informed by feedback collected by B Lab UK from the community. The new Legal Requirement and accompanying guidance are intended to be more streamlined and user-friendly. We were also able to support B Lab UK by providing advice on certain points regarding the application of the Legal Requirement to different legal structures, including building societies and cooperatives.

The next 10 years

Earlier this year, B Lab UK launched its new set of standards which B Corps in the UK will be measured against going forwards.

We participated in the consultation for the new standards and support B Lab UK's ambition. New impact topics such as Government Affairs & Collective Action recognise the need for B Corps to promote change outside their own activities. This is core to our own strategy to keep influencing positive social and environmental change in the law, government policy and business practice.

We are working through the new standards as they apply to our firm and as we come to recertify in future years, we will report on what we are doing to meet those standards.

Helping bring about meaningful change

Bates Wells has always sought to use the law as a force for good. Part of that is helping charities and campaign groups to influence policy, propose new laws and shape legislation as it goes through parliament.

Over the past year, we have worked closely with several organisations to address social or environmental needs through policy and legislation.

The future of fashion regulation

There have been significant developments in sustainability legislation, introduced primarily by the EU and the US, that apply to the fashion and textiles industry. The UK still lacks a coherent fashion and textile regulatory framework of its own, though the Circular Economy Taskforce and others in industry are now working towards this.

We worked with industry campaign group **Fashion Declares** on a pro bono basis to develop a set of reforms that would help to shift the industry onto a more sustainable and level playing field. In our joint white paper, **The Future of Fashion Regulation in the UK**, we proposed three key policy changes:

- Reduce to zero the de minimis customs threshold on imported purchases, which is currently being used by fast-fashion brands to avoid tax, to zero.
- Mandate an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for all textiles in the UK, with fees tiered according to a product's circular design, durability, fibre composition and production methods.
- Establish a Digital Product Passport system, organised according to a 'harm-based' taxonomy and translated into a traffic light system for consumer labelling.

Better Business Act

We helped to co-found and continue to support the **Better Business Act**. The campaign aims to change UK company law to require directors to balance the interests of shareholders with wider society and the environment instead of focusing primarily on financial returns for the shareholders.

This year, we worked with B Lab UK to support Martin Wrigley MP, who put forward a Private Members' Bill that would give effect to the Better Business Act principles. Our support included legal analysis and assisting with stakeholder engagement, as well as Bates Wells' Parliamentary Agent leading on the drafting the bill, known as The **Company Directors (Duties) Bill**.

The Football Governance Act

Sport has the power to bring people together and football clubs are the hubs of communities across the country. But our national sport faces major financial and governance challenges. We supported **Fair Game** on a pro bono basis in engaging with the Football Governance Act throughout its legislative journey and pressing for key amendments, to: ensure the independence of the new football regulator; impose suitably stringent tests on owners and directors; give fans a say on matters concerning football heritage; and ensure a fairer financial flow in football.

We are now preparing to help clubs prepare for the new regulatory regime and build on the principles of good governance, financial sustainability and community engagement.

Challenging cuts to overseas aid

We acted for the charity **ONE Campaign** in relation to a challenge to the government's decision to cut spending on overseas aid to 0.3% of GDP, in order to fund an increase in defence spending. In its judicial review pre-action protocol letter, ONE argued that the government had not set out a plan to redirect funding back from defence to aid, meaning that the change could be expected to continue indefinitely. Instead, a permanent change should have been effected through primary legislation.

ONE also argued that the government, in making the cut, failed to have regard to its statutory duties to reduce poverty and advance gender inequality, and that it failed to sufficiently explain its reasoning.

Supporting charities and campaigning groups

Legal action is rarely enough to drive systemic change on its own, but the law can be a powerful tool for purpose-driven organisations, especially when combined with other tactics within a broader campaign strategy.

We partnered with social justice consultancy **NEON** to produce a **guide** for charities and campaigning groups on how to use strategic litigation and other legal mechanisms to help create meaningful change.

The guide sets out how organisations can use a combination of tactics to bring about their goals. Freedom of information requests, lobbying, public protests, policy work (including drafting proposed legislation), judicial reviews and group litigation have all been used effectively in recent years to raise awareness, influence political opinion and drive systemic change.

You can access the full guide [here](#)



Fairer, more flexible funding

Finance is the lifeblood of our economy. But what if the power of the financial system could be harnessed to create positive change alongside a return on investment? Or dormant assets used to provide more affordable debt to those who need it? And where money is being given or loaned to good causes, can that be done on a more equal footing, which doesn't risk deepening dynamics of power and privilege?

We have been working with a range of grant-makers, social investors and charities to find answers to these questions.

Fair4All Finance

We have advised not-for-profit organisation **Fair4All Finance** on a number of innovative schemes to boost financial inclusion, funded by the Dormant Assets Scheme. These include funding My Community Bank, a credit union, to provide an extra £16m+ of affordable debt-consolidation lending at any one time to people in financially vulnerable circumstances, which could result in over £50m more lending over the lifetime of the investment. This will be delivered through a mixture of regulatory capital investment, a partial bad debt guarantee and a grant for one-off technology costs.

We also advised on Fair4All Finance's £3.4m funding of ClearScore for debt-consolidation loan technology and the development of its "No Interest Loan Scheme". The latter scheme aims to provide small, short-term, interest-free loans to people for whom borrowing is an appropriate solution but who can't access existing forms of credit.

Better Society Capital

We advised **Better Society Capital** on the deployment of the £15m Energy Resilience Fund aimed at supporting community and social enterprises to improve energy resilience and stabilise energy costs.

The fund has been delivered by a partnership of social investors led by Social Investment Business, with investment from Better Society Capital, Social Investment Business Foundation and Access – The Foundation for Social Investment. It aims to help purpose-led enterprises bolster their energy resilience by accessing financial and technical support to install energy-saving measures or renewable energy generation technology.

Equalising Deal Terms

In our last Impact Report, we highlighted an initiative that we had co-led with the **Equality Impact Investing Project** to address power imbalances that can exist in impact investment relationships. This led to the launch in March 2024 of the **EDT Principles**, which focus on mutual trust, respect and a fair sharing of risk.

In the past year, we have been working with forward-thinking charities to implement those principles in transactions and template documentation, not only in impact investing but also in charitable grant-making.

City Bridge Foundation

City Bridge Foundation (charity number 1035628) has been an early adopter of the Equalising Deal Terms Principles for its social investments. For example, when Helen Bamber Foundation needed funding for new premises, it turned to City Bridge Foundation. We worked with City Bridge Foundation to achieve its aim of providing that funding on a more collaborative, equitable footing than is typically the case in finance transactions. The agreement and the process were clear, simple and based on a relationship of trust, enabling the charity to access the funding it needed and focus on its vital work supporting victims of modern slavery.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

There is a natural alignment between the EDT Principles and the **Joseph Rowntree Foundation's** ongoing focus on addressing power and privilege in charitable funding structures. The Foundation asked us to review and amend its template grant agreement to foster a more collegiate and equal relationship with grant recipients. The resulting templates are simpler, more balanced in risk-sharing and conducive to a more equal relationship between the Trust and the good causes that it supports.

Good Ancestor Movement

The **Good Ancestor Movement** is a UK-based social purpose organisation that aims to create a more equitable and regenerative future by guiding individuals and organisations in redistributing wealth and fostering social equity, economic justice and ecological resilience. We have been providing legal support for new initiatives that take an innovative approach to collective redistribution, investment practice and accountability. A guiding principle in this work has been to ensure that agreements between different stakeholders are straightforward, equitable and aligned with the aims of reducing, rather than entrenching, inequalities in power and privilege.

Development Finance

Access to finance can be a major barrier for purpose-driven enterprises in the Global South. We support national development banks, charitable foundations and ethical lenders with investments in projects and organisations that create a positive impact in their communities and beyond.

FMO

We have advised **FMO**, the Dutch entrepreneurial development bank, on a range of transactions, including financing SMEs and micro-enterprises in rural areas, sustainable agriculture and women's banking in Turkey.

Tearfund

Tearfund is a Christian charity that tackles poverty across the globe through sustainable development. We advised the charity on an innovative risk-transfer transaction to support its humanitarian relief activities in Nepal, Ethiopia, Malawi and Pakistan. The provision of a natural disaster risk-transfer facility from Global Parametrics, part-funded by Humanity Insured, enabled Tearfund to finance its humanitarian activities. The finance model uses climate derivative technology. This approach is at the cutting edge and will be a model for international NGOs operating in this space in the future.

MedAccess

MedAccess is an organisation set up by British International Investment to improve access to healthcare around the world. We supported MedAccess on volume guarantee transactions, designed to increase the supply of medical innovations, including medicines and diagnostic tests.

Using the law to promote sustainability

Legal Charter 1.5

We are a founding member of **Legal Charter 1.5**, an initiative that seeks to help law firms to deepen and accelerate their responses to climate change. We are actively engaged in workstreams including education and advised emissions. In the past year, we have helped to develop:

Climate Change Legal Knowledge Hub

The Climate Change Legal Knowledge Hub gives lawyers access to a wide array of training modules and resources, curated from across member firms, educational bodies and beyond. The modules span climate change science, policy and sustainable business issues, as well as legal topics.

Matter Classification Tool

A crucial step for law firms looking to have a more positive impact is to understand and gather information at a matter level. We have helped to develop the **Matter Classification Toolkit**, a simple methodology that all law firms can use to classify their work, on a scale ranging from not engaged, through neutral to transition or aligning. By adding additional tags that relate to the advice type, sector, jurisdiction and relevant issue (for example, climate adaptation, modern slavery or pollution), firms can start to build up a picture and use the information to drive improvement.

Charity Investment Governance Principles

The landmark *Butler-Sloss* case, on which we acted, set the precedent for charities to consider non-financial factors when making investment decisions. Since then, Bates Wells Partner, Luke Fletcher, has been working with the **Charity Finance Group** and other key sector umbrella bodies to develop a set of principles to assist charity trustees, staff and committee members when making investment decisions. This work culminated in the publication, in January 2025, of the **Charity Investment Governance Principles**.

The Principles are a first of their kind in the sector. They provide practical, actionable guidance that empowers trustees and charity leaders to make informed, confident decisions about investments. The Principles, which Luke proposed, will support trustees to invest well and generate good returns, while responding to some of the key challenges of our time, such as climate change.

Global Alliance of Impact Lawyers

We are a founding member of the **Global Alliance of Impact Lawyers** (GAIL), a collaboration between lawyers who are looking to use the law to have a positive impact and to accelerate a just transition. We have provided the secretariat for the network and provide pro bono advice on how it can best operate to promote the goals of all members.

Supporting the RSPCA and animal welfare in farming

We acted for the **RSPCA** in support of a judicial review brought by The Humane League regarding the legality of farming fast-growing breeds of chicken (known as 'broiler chickens'). The Humane League challenged the failure by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to adequately enforce animal welfare laws in relation to broiler chickens. Having gone to the High Court and the Court of Appeal, the action was ultimately unsuccessful, but the court's findings on the correct interpretation of the relevant legislation is expected to make it difficult for UK farmers to lawfully keep fast-growing broiler chickens, and could extend to other selective breeding that results in animal suffering.

Supporting natural ecosystems

We are witnessing a paradigm shift in the recognition and protection of our natural world. The global rights of nature movement is challenging legal systems to extend to animals, rivers and mountains the same legal personhood that other non-human entities such as companies already enjoy. Businesses are looking for genuine, high-integrity solutions that can offer some balance to the environmental impact of their activities. Meanwhile, policymakers are committing resources to innovative land recovery schemes and finding ways to value 'natural capital'.

Knepp Wildland Foundation

We reported last year on the work we have been doing with the **Knepp Wildland Foundation** on its Landscape Recovery pilot relating to the catchment of the River Adur. Our involvement includes working with the stakeholders to agree and establish an appropriate governance mechanism that balances diverse interests while remaining in service to the core aim of improving water quality and flood alleviation and increasing biodiversity.

In May 2025, the Foundation submitted its Project Development Plan. We are continuing to support the Foundation and to use the learnings from this innovative scheme to inform future projects, including the Luppitt Landscape Partnership in East Devon and the Wylde Valley project in Wiltshire.

Arup

Arup, a global built environment consultancy, reinforced its commitment to its **Net Zero Plan**, by investing **£1m upfront** to secure 10,000tCO₂e of future carbon removal credits. These credits are sourced from the restoration of 67.5 hectares of degraded land with carbon-depleted soils as part of **Nattergal's** 617ha **Boothby Wildland project** in Lincolnshire, UK. These credits will be retired by Arup over the next 30 years, the majority in 2054, once the carbon removal has been verified and certified by **Wilder Carbon**.

By committing funding upfront rather than through land ownership, this approach provides a new model for private sector support in nature restoration, and Arup hopes this model will inspire others to follow suit. A key driver behind this investment was Nattergal's commitment to delivering wide-ranging environmental and social benefits that extend well beyond carbon removal and storage alone.

We worked with Arup and their partners, Boothby, Nattergal and Wilder Carbon, to negotiate a bespoke legal agreement that safeguarded the interests of all parties. This multi-party agreement was designed around a shared ambition to explore mutual value in tackling climate change. Rather than all parties looking simply to push the risk elsewhere, there was a combination of rigorous due diligence to identify the knowns and a creative risk sharing and managing approach to the unknowns. This enabled all to proceed in a spirit of collective endeavour that enhanced the strong foundations of the project.

This work is intended to have broader impact, as many private and public sector organisations face similar financial, supply and quality risks from relying on the future UK carbon removal spot market. Arup's partnership with Nattergal and Wilder Carbon highlights an approach for others to follow to manage their own forecasted residual emissions – one that may offer greater resilience, predictability and outcomes for our climate, nature and the local community.

Lawyers for Nature

We are supporting **Lawyers for Nature** on its mission to reimagine the law so that it values and protects the inherent value of the natural world. This has involved providing both technical legal assistance on its own operations as well as supporting the development of its innovative public-facing activities.

Common

We act for **Common**, which is developing a suite of governance and financing solutions to support local communities looking to take a more active role as custodians of natural assets in their bioregions. By working together to identify relevant priorities for different types of ecosystem, levels of community involvement and sources of financing, we are helping to develop governance and finance models that are responsive to the local landscape and community aspirations.

The first project was supporting the acquisition by the community of woodland in the Exe Valley. Common supported a second project in 2023 and two projects in Wales are now going through the conveyancing process, with a further 19 in development.

A better way of doing business

As lawyers, we have an important part to play in empowering our clients to act in a way that is more socially responsible and climate-positive. We have been working with clients to educate them and to develop tools that they can choose to deploy in transactions, as well as helping forward-thinking organisations to push the boundaries with models such as nature guardians on the board and a steward ownership model for companies.

Green contracts

As well as working with **The Chancery Lane Project**, which produces climate-aligned clauses that can be used across industry, over the past year we have been developing a series of green clauses that are specific to the types of real estate, commercial and corporate transactions on which we act.

Over the next year, we are aiming to deploy these clauses in a range of matters and to broaden the choice and scope of our impact-driven clauses.

We also work with clients and wider industry to educate organisations about ethical contracting. For example, during the Good Business Charter's 'Good Business Fortnight' in February 2025, we partnered with the Ethical Training Initiative to deliver a session for many of our clients on sustainable supply chains and ethical sourcing. This covered practical and legal strategies for reducing supply chain emissions and addressing human rights concerns.

Athena Blue

We advised **Athena Blue** on embedding a nature-centric governance structure in its articles of association. This involves the appointment of a director to the board of the company who will represent Nature and Future Generations. Athena Blue has been established to build a pipeline of investable Blue Economy projects powered by AI, grounded in science and designed for impact to help conserve and restore the ocean.

House of Hackney

We supported B Corp British luxury interiors and lifestyle brand **House of Hackney** on the latest stage of its regenerative business and investment strategy. We advised on its share capital reorganisation, crowdfunding bond offer via Triodos Bank and enhanced governance arrangements in the new holding company's articles of association relating to the appointment of a guardian director to the board on behalf of Mother Nature and Future Generations.

Science Based Targets Initiative

We advised **CDP** on the legal aspects of the spin out of the **Science Based Targets Initiative** (SBTi), a major initiative that enables companies and financial institutions to set science-based emissions reductions targets and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the latest climate science. We have supported CDP to liaise with the other founding members of the SBTi (WWF, World Resources Institute, We Mean Business and the UN Global Compact) to agree a new structure and road map for the SBTi to become independent. This includes supporting CDP with drafting the governing documents and incorporating the SBTi as an independent charitable company; registering the SBTi as a charity; and negotiating a multi-jurisdictional spin out to transfer assets and people into the SBTi.

Giving back

Pro bono

A large proportion of our client base is charities and social enterprises. We always aim to deliver excellent value for money and often act on reduced rates that reflect our support for their missions.

Every year, we also provide pro bono legal advice to a range of organisations and individuals who often have important legal needs but would not otherwise have the means to obtain advice.

In the last year, this has included:

- Charity registration and structuring advice, including for a charity that supports children affected by conflicts and poverty.
- Representing individuals in employment and immigration matters.
- Supporting strategic litigation by acting pro bono, in full or in part, for charities such as ONE in its judicial review and on other important issues such as river pollution and animal welfare.

Volunteering

All of our people are able to take up to two days each year as volunteering leave, in addition to the countless hours that many spend outside work, in voluntary positions ranging from school governorships to mental health support, arts organisations, youth groups and sports clubs. Many of our people are involved in the **Stephen Lloyd Awards**, which are administered by the Bates Wells Foundation and provide mentorship, pro bono professional advice and financial support for projects that can achieve practical, sustainable social change.

We also run firmwide volunteering days. In the past year, this has included tree planting and community gardening.

Preserving Arctic sea ice

Real Ice Development Co works to fight climate change through a combination of pioneering science and collaboration with global partners and local communities affected by melting Arctic sea ice. A previous winner of the Stephen Lloyd Awards, we have continued to support Real Ice with its mission. In the past year, we worked with Real Ice on a pro bono basis to restructure its corporate group. The goal was to enable the organisation to scale its impact by transitioning to a more investment-ready structure, which will allow it to expand its climate initiatives globally.

Trustee positions

One of the reasons why our charity clients trust us to understand their needs is because many of us are charity trustees ourselves. Our people currently hold at least 59 trustee roles, supporting a wide range of causes including wildlife conservation, social justice, child poverty and major cultural institutions.

Payroll Giving

We encourage our employees to give to charity at the point of receiving their salary, through B Corp **GoodPAYE**, the only 100% charity-owned payroll giving organisation. This year, we were awarded the government-supported **Payroll Giving Quality Mark: Silver Award**.

Reducing the impact of our operations

We're working hard to reduce our carbon footprint in line with the Science-Based Target we set ourselves in 2023. We are aiming to reduce our total emissions (across all three scopes) by 50% by 2030, and at least 90% by 2050, from our baseline year of 2019.

It is important that we take into account the full carbon footprint of all our operations, including expenditure on purchased goods and services such as advertising, business services and information technology. So we measure all of our Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions and have worked hard to improve the quality of our data including introducing some new accounting codes to help us better categorise our purchasing information.

We are continuing to cut emissions year-on-year,

- Total emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3) financial year 2023/24: **1,246 tCO₂e**
- Reduction from previous year: **3%**
- Reduction from baseline year (2019): **27%**

Having made significant strides in recent years – reducing our carbon footprint by 25% between 2019 and 2022/23 – it is challenging to make further big reductions but we are committed to continuing to drive reductions. The vast majority of our emissions fall within Scope 3, which includes our purchased goods and services. To help us better understand these emissions and help us determine priority areas for reductions, we have worked hard to improve the quality of our data. This includes introducing some new accounting codes to help us better categorise our purchasing information.

We are working hard to find new ways to reduce our impact across the board. We will continue to work with our suppliers, clients and other stakeholders to share learnings from our own carbon reduction journey and to find new solutions for the challenges that persist.

For our 2024 emissions, we increased our budget for carbon credits to ensure that we were able to balance all emissions we haven't been able to eliminate, not just the 'operational' ones. Our balancing strategy involved a mixed approach of supporting land, sea and carbon removal schemes.

- Land: **Make It Wild** – 1140 Tonnes
- Sea: **Seatrees Tokens** – 100 tonnes
- Carbon removal: **UNDO** – 7 tonnes

Lighting the way

A key action to help reduce our footprint is our investment in a significant project to improve the sustainability of our office lighting. By switching all of our office lights to LEDs and redesigning the configuration to reduce the number of lights, **we will reduce the energy consumption of our office lighting by up to 80%**. The project is an important part of our strategy to meet our near-term carbon reduction targets. Having a better-lit office space is also known to contribute positively to employee wellbeing.

Full details of our carbon footprint report for FY24 can be found [here](#)

Using our purchasing power for good

We prioritise working with suppliers who share our values and operate sustainably. This includes other B Corps or social enterprises. For all our main suppliers we ask them to complete a supplier questionnaire and confirm they can meet the requirements of our supplier code of conduct. Where changing circumstances mean these standards can no longer be met, we will cease purchasing from those suppliers: in the past year, we have stopped working with two suppliers who were not able to confirm they paid their staff the (London) Living Wage.

Of our current suppliers:

- **28%** are B Corps, charities or social enterprises
- **44%** are SMEs
- **45%** are independent, local businesses
- **29%** have boards with at least 50% women or other under-represented groups

Reducing our impact at an individual level

We all have a part to play in changing our behaviours and adopting more climate-friendly habits. Our climate and nature group provides tools, information and incentives to guide people's personal purchasing and other behaviours.

Climate education

We ran Climate Activation training for everyone in the firm, aimed at creating a better understanding of the climate crisis and how it impacts us all. We wanted to empower people to feel confident opening up conversations around the climate crisis and identifying their own action plans to create change, at an individual level and at Bates Wells.

We hosted an Energy Spotlight, where Bates Wells speakers were joined by experts sharing insights on community-based energy solutions, ways to reduce emissions at home and the future of fusion energy. We also ran an informal session where colleagues shared personal experiences of how they have taken positive action personally to green their finances like switching to a more ethical bank or savings account.

Climate participation

One of the most effective ways to improve engagement with the natural world is to participate in on-the-ground activities. In February, a group of Bates Wells volunteers joined Would Could Should CIC to plant over 1,000 trees in Somerset. We have also teamed up with Leaves Breathe to improve a community garden at a local sheltered accommodation.

Green perks

To encourage our people to take action in their personal lives, we provide a range of incentives, including:

- Giving paid travel time to employees who elect to travel via land or sea instead of flying through our Climate Perks membership. Over the past year, over 64 hours of green travel time was claimed.
- Offering a one-off payment for people to switch to a green energy supplier at home.
- Providing discounted memberships for Forest Bikes, to encourage people to commute by ebike.

Ethical pension fund

Our default pension fund for Bates Wells employees is Aviva's Sustainable Stewardship. We established a pension governance committee in the firm and part of its remit is to oversee and challenge Aviva's ESG performance. This year we have asked Aviva challenging questions about the actions they are taking to influence the companies in which they invest and we have asked for evidence of the subsequent actions taken by those investee companies to improve their ESG performance.

Building a more diverse, equitable and inclusive firm

Who we are – Gender

Management board:



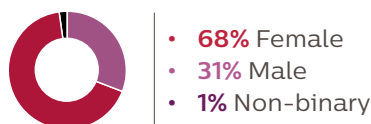
Senior management team:



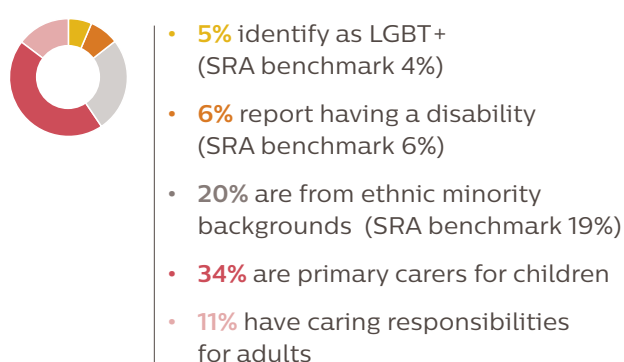
Partnership:



Employees:



Employee demographics:



Our firm demographics are broadly in line with SRA benchmarking for most characteristics. Nevertheless, we want to go further. We have improved our lateral hiring process to ensure objective scoring that is linked to job competencies and is standardised across the firm, and have been updating our job descriptions to reflect gender-neutral language.

Two areas of focus are increasing social mobility, at Bates Wells and in the legal profession more generally,

and building a more diverse and inclusive workforce so that we can attract and retain more people from ethnic minorities and other under-represented groups.

Promoting social mobility

In September 2024 we welcomed our first two solicitor apprentices, joining three apprentices in our business teams. Following a successful collaboration in 2024, we worked again this year with Making the Leap to provide a two-day assessment centre training course for all applicants. We will be joined by two more solicitor apprentices in September 2025. As with all other roles (including solicitor work experience placements), we pay our solicitor apprentices at least the London Living Wage.

SMART Legal Commitment

To further support aspiring trainees who face financial challenges, earlier this year we were one of a founding cohort of law firms to launch the Social Mobility and Real Talent Commitment (SMART Commitment).

As part of the Commitment, we will provide financial support to eligible vacation scheme students and future trainees from lower socio-economic backgrounds, providing funding to cover the cost of accommodation, professional clothing and technology equipment ahead of joining the firm.

Candidates can apply for financial support directly through Aspiring Solicitors, a leading, trusted diversity platform, with no identifying information shared with Bates Wells, therefore helping to break down the barriers associated with requesting financial assistance from employers. Since its launch, more than 1 in 10 candidates have made use of this scheme.

Diversity and Inclusion

We have an active Diversity and Inclusion Forum (DIF). Groups such as REACH (Race, Ethnicity & Cultural Heritage) & RISE, Faith Group, UnstoppABLE, and Queen Street Pride set the tone and the strategy for creating an inclusive culture across the firm. We support and encourage active engagement in the groups' activities. Our DIF groups have been

instrumental in the firm's adoption of initiatives such as the Race at Work Charter, the Race Fairness Commitment, the Law Society's Women in Law Pledge, the Mindful Business Charter and the Halo Code to end ethnic hair-based discrimination.

Sharing stories and perspectives

We believe in the power of conversation to build a more inclusive culture. To facilitate discussions about race, faith, gender, sexuality and disability, in the past year we have:

- Delivered training to all partners on building equity across the firm.
- Arranged Coffee and Chat sessions to provide a safe space and a forum for discussions around topics such as neurodivergence and how we support the older adults in our lives.
- Set up a library of books on subjects such as caring, neurodiversity, physical disabilities and anxiety. We encourage our people to borrow books to help them, whether with their own circumstances, looking after loved ones or better understanding others.
- Introduced mindful work allocation and delegation guidance to ensure work is allocated equally and to open up communications about how decisions are made and the impact they have.
- Published an extended equity pay report, which now includes class, LGBT+ and disability reporting alongside gender and ethnicity.

Celebrating our cultures and our differences

We have enjoyed a full calendar of events throughout the year:

- We celebrated Black History Month with a series of actions on the theme of "Reclaiming Narratives", including a weekly book club, a Q&A with Stephen Lloyd Awards winner Kevin Koffi, a virtual quiz and an exhibition of pieces by black artists, curated by members of our REACH & RISE groups.
- We hosted a film screening and discussion about *Who Cares*, a play that shines a light on the untold stories of young carers in Salford. The stories told in the play are based on real life testimonies from members of the Salford Young Carers Service that examine the impact of being a young carer and the

austerity in which these individuals were living.

- To mark Disability History Month, two members of the Disabled Solicitors Network came in to deliver a talk around ADHD in the workplace, particularly in the legal profession.
- We ran a series of events to celebrate LGBT+ History Month including an inspirational visit from Switchboard LGBTQ+ CEO, Stephanie Fuller, a book club, a "what now" discussion and a series of profiles to raise awareness of prominent activists and their stories.
- In July, we celebrated Pride with a Queen Street Pride picnic in Regent's Park for all of our people and their families.

This is me

This year, we started an ongoing intersectional role model campaign, "This is Me". We wanted to shine a spotlight on some of the incredible people we have working in the firm who have come into their roles through a variety of backgrounds and have faced different challenges along the way. Volunteers share their personal stories, and we use posters around the office to amplify those voices and help to create a more inclusive culture.

Accessibility and Inclusion audit

In November 2024, we invited **Ifnotme-Inclusion** to conduct an accessibility and inclusion audit of our office building. The audit team included a wheelchair user and a visually impaired, neurodiverse person, who were able to use their professional skills and lived experience to assess how people with different characteristics might experience our work and meeting environment.

The team were impressed with the culture and facilities on offer but identified some areas where we could improve. We have already introduced several improvements ourselves, including additional signage, an evacuation chair to support wheelchair users in emergencies, and additional training in disability awareness. We are also introducing a hearing loop at our reception desk.

Governance

Our governance structure

We're a limited liability partnership jointly owned by a group of 38 elected partners. The firm is led by our Management Board, made up of four elected partners, the Managing Partner and our Chief Operating Officer (COO).

Listening to different voices

It is important that our strategy and operational decisions are informed by a range of views and interests. In addition to engaging with stakeholder groups on specific issues such as setting our new, five-year strategy, our governance structure includes permanent groups that represent different interests.

Our Employee Forum is made up of representatives from across the firm. It acts as a sounding board for employees and for the Management Board. It regularly shares the suggestions and concerns of our people with the board.

The Bates Wells Climate & Nature group helps us manage our impact on climate change and nature. It is led by a board that includes our Managing Partner and COO and it is project managed by our Senior Operations Manager, with input from people across the firm.

As discussed above, we also have a strong network of DIF groups, which set the tone and the strategy for creating an inclusive culture across the firm. The HR Director and a partner co-lead the forum, coordinate with the networks and work with them to set our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) strategy.

Showing leadership through the work we do

Reputational Risk Group

Our Reputational Risk Group is led by our Managing Partner and includes our Director of Risk and Compliance, COO, Director of Business Development and Marketing, and partners who represent the interests of our climate and nature, purpose and impact, and EDI commitments.

The group is convened to consider whether a matter or client could have a material negative impact on climate, biodiversity or social justice – thereby impacting our own purpose and values. The group can and does sometimes seek additional information from the client, look to influence them positively or decline to act if we believe that the work would conflict with our values and strategy.

Bates Wells Sustainability and Responsibility Pledge

The Bates Wells **Sustainability and Responsibility Pledge** codifies our intention to carry out our legal work with integrity and honesty, without causing negative impacts on nature, biodiversity or people. Our aim is to use the law in ways that minimise ecological harm and climate heating and create access to justice, the protection of human rights and upholding the rule of law.

In practice this means our clients can expect us to guide them towards considering the environmental and social implications of the work that we are doing with them while looking for innovative ways to mitigate any potential negative impacts. We will continue to use our influence to encourage more sustainable and responsible practices in policy, law and business.

Conclusion

Measuring our impact and making sure we have done what we set out to do is as important as looking for the next challenge. As I finish reading our report this year, I am glad to see the updates on some of those core projects that we presented in last year's report, including finding ways to make funding fairer for charities and social enterprises, and supporting innovative projects to recover landscapes.

As a firm, we aim to show leadership in the legal, charity and B Corp communities of which we are a part. Through our involvement with groups like **Legal Charter 1.5**, **GAIL**, **Better Business Act** and **B Lab UK**, we seek to champion more responsible models for business. I am proud of the number of Bates Wells people who drive these initiatives and who undertake pro bono projects, trusteeships and all sorts of voluntary roles on top of their 'day' jobs.

We value all of our people and continue to set challenging targets to make the firm more inclusive. I am pleased to see how we compare against others in the sector through the SRA benchmark metrics. And winning peer-reviewed awards for our DEI and sustainability initiatives and achieving the highest B Corp law firm score in the world most definitely spurs us on to keep doing business better.



Sally Procopis
Chief Operating Officer



B Corp



Good Business Charter



Business Declares



Social Mobility Foundation



Menopause Pledge



Law Society Women in Law Pledge



Living Wage Employer



Social Enterprise UK



Net Zero Lawyers Alliance



Mindful Business Charter



Black Solicitors Network



MyGWork



Legal Charter 1.5



Race at Work Charter



Halo code



City Belonging Project



Greener Litigation Pledge



Campaign for Greener Arbitrations

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

www.bateswells.co.uk