

BatesWells

Impact Report 2026

Environmental
leadership
in action



Certified

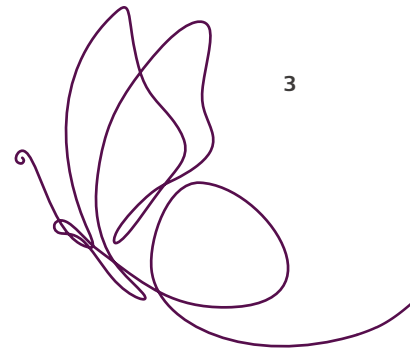


Corporation

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Introduction

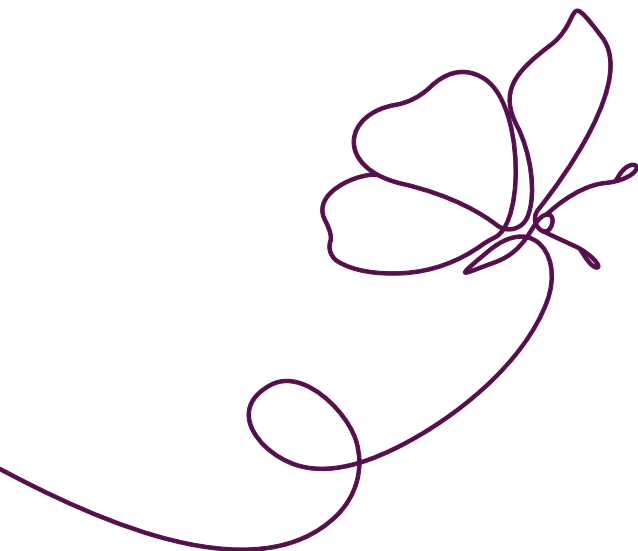
At the end of each financial year we reflect on what we've achieved over the past 12 months. At Bates Wells, we don't just review our performance in terms of the profit we achieved; we review our impact on the planet and people.

In last year's Impact Report, we introduced our new strategy, built around the three interconnected pillars of People, Planet and Profit. Since then, we have continued to challenge ourselves to improve the way we operate, seeking to create positive outcomes across all three areas. For this year's report, however, we have chosen to focus attention on the progress we are making for the planet.

The conversation around nature is changing. Organisations are moving beyond minimising harm to exploring how legal, financial and governance systems can fundamentally support environmental recovery. From the global Rights of Nature movement to growing investment in natural capital and land restoration, there is increasing momentum behind approaches that place nature at the centre of decision-making.

As legal leaders in sustainability, we calculated our carbon footprint, including Scope 3, with fellow B Corp Grain, and have committed to an SBTi target to halve our emissions by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050. And our Sustainability and Responsibility Pledge sets out our public commitments to take account of the impact on climate and nature in the legal work that we undertake and the clients for whom we choose to act.

We continue to push ourselves and other businesses to find ways to protect our natural world. We can help empower our clients to act in ways that are more sustainable, responsible and climate-positive. At what feels like a critical time for this approach, I look forward to measuring the outcomes of this work and reporting back. Please do get in touch if anything in this report makes you question why or how we do what we do. As always, we'd love to hear from you.



Erica Crump
Managing Partner

Leading the transition to a nature-positive economy

We see environmental sustainability as much more than a compliance issue. Our role is to help shape the systems, governance models and legal frameworks that support a more sustainable, nature-positive economy.

We believe we have a responsibility as lawyers to help our clients drive meaningful environmental and social change. We work with organisations to develop practical legal solutions that support climate action, nature recovery and long-term stewardship, while supporting innovative governance models such as nature representation at board level and steward ownership structures that align commercial success with environmental and social outcomes.

As a commercial business, we're also continuing to look for new ways to reduce our overall impact on the planet. We work with suppliers, clients and other stakeholders to share learnings from our carbon reduction journey and to find new solutions for the challenges that persist. Our Climate and Nature Board leads this work to improve the way that we manage our operations and the way that we commute, travel and recycle.

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Our environmental impact in action

Advancing circular fashion

In 2025, we collaborated with **Fashion Declares** to publish a white paper setting out policy recommendations to accelerate the transition to a more sustainable and circular fashion industry. We also support purpose-led businesses such as **Remnant Revolution**, advising on governance and sustainable growth.

Embedding nature into decision-making

We have helped organisations incorporate environmental considerations into their governance and legal structures. This includes advising **Athena Blue** on the appointment of Nature and Future Generations Guardians to its board, ensuring the interests of both the natural world and future generations are represented in strategic decision-making.

Driving systemic change

We co-founded the **Better Business Act** campaign, which seeks to transform the role of business in society by placing responsibility for people and the planet at the heart of corporate governance. In 2025, a Private Members' Bill that we drafted was introduced to Parliament.

We also advise **Social Value International** on its "True and Fair" project, which aims to ensure businesses account for the environmental and social impacts of their activities, helping create greater transparency and accountability in the transition to a more sustainable economy.

Overall decrease in absolute emissions and intensity for Bates Wells

Our own emissions have decreased by 5% in comparison to FY24. Our intensity has decreased by 9.8% per full time employee and 11.7% per £ million of turnover.



Through this work, we are helping our clients and working ourselves to move beyond mitigating environmental harm towards a position where we are actively contributing to climate resilience, biodiversity recovery and a more sustainable future for our people and nature.

Nature on the Board: from emerging concept to practical governance

Nature representation in governance is not a new idea. Across a number of progressive organisations, particularly in Europe, businesses are increasingly exploring how the interests of nature and other underrepresented stakeholders can be reflected in strategic decision-making. Alongside nature, there is growing discussion around giving greater voice to communities, future generations, young people and the oceans within governance frameworks.

As organisations recognise their dependence on healthy ecosystems, attention is turning to how governance structures can better account for environmental impacts, biodiversity and long-term resilience. Representing nature within governance is one way of ensuring these considerations are given meaningful weight alongside other strategic priorities.

Our role

By helping clients adopt innovative governance approaches, we are contributing to a growing movement that recognises nature as a critical stakeholder and places environmental stewardship at the heart of organisational purpose and decision-making. Such models have the potential to play an important role in supporting the transition to a more sustainable, nature-positive economy.

We have worked with clients to help transform this pioneering concept into practical legal structures that organisations can adopt. The model challenges businesses to move beyond environmental commitments and embed nature directly within governance and decision-making structures and processes.

The impact

We helped develop governance mechanisms that ensure environmental considerations are systematically integrated into board-level discussions. These measures include:

- Embedding commitments to creating positive environmental impact within the organisation's constitutional documents.
- Strengthening directors' responsibilities to consider the effects of business activities on the natural world.
- Establishing the role of a Nature Guardian, bringing specialist environmental knowledge and expertise into governance processes.
- Requiring environmental considerations to be addressed when key strategic decisions are made.
- Introducing enhanced accountability and transparency through reporting on the organisation's environmental impact and how nature-related considerations have influenced board decisions.





What's next?

Building on the momentum of the Nature on the Board movement, we are exploring a number of opportunities to expand and evolve the concept over the coming year.

While nature remains central to this work, the conversation is evolving to consider how other voices could be represented in governance structures. This includes communities, young people and future generations. These models have the potential to help organisations take a more holistic and long-term approach to decision-making.

Exploring the blue economy

A particularly exciting area of development is the growing focus on the blue economy and the role of oceans in environmental, social and economic resilience. With strong relevance across both commercial and charitable sectors, this work has the potential to address challenges and opportunities connected to marine ecosystems, food systems and global supply chains.

Supporting cultural institutions

We also see significant potential for adapting these ideas within the cultural sector. For organisations where constitutional changes may be more complex, alternative approaches such as appointing a dedicated Nature Trustee could provide a practical route to embedding environmental considerations into governance and decision-making. Partnerships with organisations operating at the intersection of culture and sustainability will be key to advancing this work.

Looking ahead

The growing interest in Nature on the Board reflects a wider shift towards governance models that recognise the interconnectedness of business, society and the natural world. We are excited to continue helping organisations test, refine and implement these innovative approaches, ensuring that environmental stewardship becomes an integral part of how decisions are made and value is created for future generations.

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Sustainable fashion and the circular economy: driving change in one of the world's most environmentally significant industries

Over the past year, we have strengthened our advisory position in the sustainable fashion and circular economy sector, supporting businesses, policymakers and industry leaders working to reduce fashion's environmental footprint and to create more sustainable business models.

Our work has combined thought leadership, policy development, industry collaboration and practical legal support to help accelerate the transition to a more circular and responsible fashion industry.

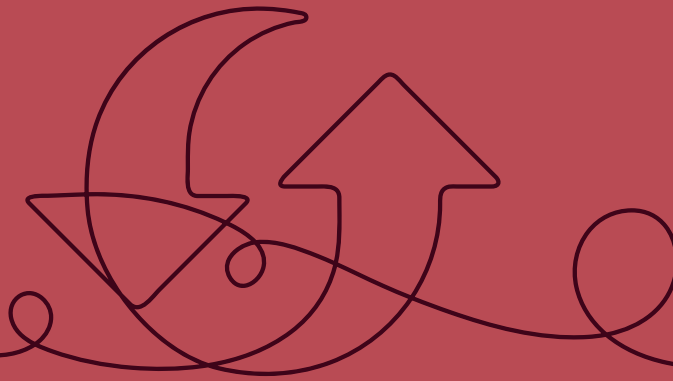
A key milestone was our collaboration with **Fashion Declares** to produce a research-led white paper exploring the future of fashion in the UK. The report set out a series of policy recommendations designed to support a more sustainable fashion ecosystem and received national media attention, including coverage in the **Independent** and the **Financial Times**.

We have also helped bring together influential voices from across the sector to explore solutions to some of the industry's most pressing environmental challenges. This has included hosting and participating in roundtables, workshops and conferences with business leaders, investors, policymakers and sustainability advocates, creating space for collaboration and the exchange of ideas on circularity, responsible production and long-term resilience.

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We co-founded the European Sustainable Fashion Forum alongside **Deploy**, the UK's highest scoring fashion B Corp, to bring together key individuals in the space to challenge current UK policy. The forum aims to unite fragmented efforts to drive change, encouraging collaboration and united efforts to drive legislative and societal change.

We have worked directly with sustainable fashion businesses and entrepreneurs, providing legal guidance on governance, investment readiness and responsible growth. Through partnerships such as our work with **Evo Fashion**, we have delivered educational programmes and pro bono support designed to help emerging businesses scale their impact.

Alongside this, we have continued to contribute to the wider public conversation around sustainable fashion through articles, blogs and media commentary, including contributions to publications such as the Financial Times and Just Style. We have also shared our expertise at leading industry events including Crafting Fashion Futures, Source Fashion, the Grunin Conference and Tech Nation's flagship sustainability discussions. We are members of **Bright Tide**, the **Atlas Club** and **Future Planet**.

Our influence in this space has been recognised through a number of leadership appointments and advisory roles. These include serving on the advisory boards of **Future Planet** and **Athena Blue**, acting as an advocate for the **National Oceanography Centre**, and supporting initiatives exploring the connections between sustainable fashion, ocean health and the emerging blue economy.

Why it matters

The fashion industry faces growing pressure to address its impact on climate, biodiversity and resource consumption. Through our work with businesses, industry bodies and policymakers, we are helping to build the legal, regulatory and governance frameworks needed to support a more circular, regenerative and environmentally sustainable future for fashion.

Supporting a more sustainable fashion industry

Remnant Revolution

Remnant Revolution is a female-led enterprise that brings together a community of skilled local crafters, repurposing surplus fabric destined for landfill into unique homeware products. Our advice is helping to ensure the business can attract future investment on a robust legal and governance foundation, supporting its contribution to the circular and sustainable fashion economy.

We advised Remnant Revolution on the development of its governance structure, including the introduction of a golden shareholder mechanism which enables the protection of founder rights.

British Pasture Leather

British Pasture Leather connects designers with ecosystem restoration through the production of leather. They use pasture-fed cattle hides from certified farms whose practices align with regenerative principles – supporting the health of soil, animals, nature and people.

We advised British Pasture Leather on contractual terms for their diversification into consulting services for global initiatives related to traceability and verification.

Kurt Geiger

The Creative Corner is a creative education programme co-designed by the Kurt Geiger Kindness Foundation (KGKF) in partnership with Cameroonian creative and influencer, Juliette Foxx. The project is based in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and aims to inspire young people through a combination of culture, traditional craft and fashion. Students at Holy Infant School in Yaoundé will learn from local artisans, explore traditional practices and reimagine signature designs using textiles donated by Kurt Geiger, giving them a second life.

We jointly advised Kurt Geiger and KGKF on the proposed programme structure and development of a practical roadmap for implementation of the project. Our work included the design of grant funding and collaboration arrangements, and the underpinning legal agreements between the key stakeholders, including the local artisans and Holy Infant School.

Alongside the contractual framework, we also provided advice on the key governance and risk management considerations facing KGKF from a charity law perspective, helping the trustees understand and mitigate potential legal and operational challenges. We also coordinated with specialist local lawyers in Cameroon to ensure local legal considerations were properly addressed and provided ongoing strategic support as the programme evolved.



Driving positive environmental change

Lawyers for Nature

Turning innovative ideas into action

The challenge

Lawyers for Nature is an innovation initiative exploring how legal systems can help redefine our relationship with the natural world. Their work focuses on developing practical mechanisms that give greater recognition to nature's interests and support organisations, communities and policymakers in adopting new approaches to environmental stewardship.

Our role

We have developed a strong and collaborative relationship with Lawyers for Nature, supporting the development and implementation of their pioneering ideas. From the earliest stages, we have acted as a trusted sounding board, helping to identify legal barriers and opportunities and shaping approaches that can deliver meaningful change in practice.

As concepts have progressed from theory to implementation, we have worked closely with Lawyers for Nature and partner organisations to create legal frameworks that embed ecological considerations into decision-making and governance.

The impact

Our work has included supporting a number of businesses to bring nature's voice into the boardroom by amending their constitutions and governance structures. In several cases, these changes have been reinforced through the introduction of new policies designed to ensure environmental commitments are reflected in everyday business operations.

We are also advising charities exploring how greater recognition of nature within their governance and decision-making can strengthen the delivery of their charitable purposes while ensuring compliance with charity law and regulatory expectations.

We have also contributed to a pioneering project examining how land could be returned to the 'ownership' of nature through innovative legal mechanisms. This work is now progressing towards practical pilot schemes that will test how such models can support long-term conservation, ecosystem recovery and environmental stewardship.

Why it matters

The environmental challenges facing society highlight the harms that have grown over time from our approach to nature as something there to be used and discarded as we wish, rather than something we are part of and dependent upon. A reframing of the relationship between people and nature is a fundamental prerequisite for an effective response to the challenges we face. By helping develop and implement innovative legal solutions, we are supporting a growing movement that seeks to place nature at the heart of governance, land management and organisational decision-making, creating lasting benefits for both people and the natural world.



Spotlight on David Hunter

Senior Counsel at Bates Wells

David, you've spent more than 30 years in the legal profession. Tell us about your background and the work you do today.



I've been a lawyer for over three decades, including training at a magic circle firm and spending ten years as a partner in a national practice. Today, I use that experience to support organisations committed to creating positive social and environmental change.

A large part of my work involves helping organisations embed purpose into their governance, operations and decision-making. That can mean reviewing governance structures, reshaping contractual relationships and helping businesses align their activities with broader goals such as addressing the climate emergency and biodiversity loss.

What other areas do you advise on?

I work extensively on the financing of environmental and social initiatives. This includes advising on investment structures, blended finance arrangements and philanthropic funding, as well as helping organisations develop partnerships capable of creating systemic and lasting impact. I am deeply fortunate this gives me the chance to work with inspirational clients like Dark Matter Labs, Lawyers for Nature and many others working with imagination and urgency.

You've played an influential role in shaping the legal profession's response to climate change. Can you tell us more about that?

Since 2020, I've been a member of The Law Society's Climate Change Working Group. As part of that group, I helped draft The Law Society's Climate Change Resolution, published in 2021, and the Guidance for Solicitors on Climate Change, first published in 2023 and updated in 2026.

I was also a member of the UN Race to Zero Serviced Emissions Working Group, which examined how professional advisers can influence their

clients' emissions through the advice they provide. I co-authored guidance published in 2024 and have continued to advocate for the legal profession to take seriously the concept of advised emissions.

Collaboration appears to be a recurring theme in your work.

Absolutely. I was a co-founder of the Legal Charter 1.5 Network, which brought together law firms to address the practical challenges of reducing emissions at the speed and scale needed to align with the ambitions of the Paris Agreement.

At Bates Wells, I also authored the firm's Sustainability and Responsibility Pledge, establishing a public commitment to advancing sustainability within the business and through the advice we provide to clients.

You also contribute to the wider debate on sustainability and the role of lawyers.

Yes, it's an area I'm passionate about. I've written extensively on climate-related issues for publications including *The Lawyer* and *The Law Society Gazette*. I also regularly publish articles and blogs exploring the role of lawyers in navigating an increasingly complex and uncertain world, and I speak frequently at conferences such as Legal ESG and the GAIL Annual Summit.

You've recently received recognition for this work.

In 2024, I was honoured to be included in *The Lawyer's Hot 100*, which recognised my contribution to raising the profile of climate issues across the legal profession. And this year, I became the first UK Green Ambassador, an award from the Legal 500 directory.

And outside your client work?

I am convinced lawyers and the law have a pivotal role to play in helping navigate the polycrisis we find ourselves in – provided we recognise, alongside our clients, the need for a fundamental shift in mindsets. Consequently, I am involved in a number of initiatives aimed at preserving the conditions conducive to life on this planet.



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Empowering communities to lead nature recovery

Common (Common Nature Ltd)

Developing scalable governance and financing solutions for community-led stewardship of natural landscapes

The challenge

Common empowers UK local communities to acquire, own, and sustainably manage wild landscapes for nature recovery. By blending grassroots community action with institutional finance and legal framework support, they help local groups overcome the biggest barriers to land ownership. Many communities are eager to play a more active role in protecting and restoring the natural assets within their regions, but there is no one-size-fits-all model for doing so. Different ecosystems, levels of community involvement and funding opportunities require different governance and financing approaches. Without flexible frameworks that reflect local priorities, nature-based projects can struggle to attract support, secure investment and deliver long-term impact.

Our role

We worked with Common to develop a suite of governance and financing solutions that support community-led stewardship of natural assets. Together, we identified the key priorities associated with different ecosystem types, levels of community participation and sources of funding. We then explored how these priorities interact and designed alternative governance and financing models to meet a range of local needs and ambitions.



The impact

The resulting framework enables Common to tailor its approach to the unique environmental, social and economic characteristics of each landscape and community. By providing robust, adaptable and scalable models, it helps ensure that projects are grounded in local aspirations while meeting the standards of assurance required by investors and other stakeholders. This improves the integrity, credibility and investment impact of nature-based projects across the UK.

Why it matters

Nature recovery depends on solutions that work for both people and place. By creating a practical framework for community-led governance and financing, we helped Common provide bespoke solutions without having to reinvent the wheel for every project. This approach gives communities greater confidence to take action, attracts investment into local nature recovery initiatives and supports the development of resilient, long-term stewardship models that can be replicated and scaled nationwide.

Spotlight on Megan Watkins

Senior Operations & Sustainability Manager at Bates Wells

Megan, tell us about your role at Bates Wells.



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Sustainability is something I'm personally passionate about. I believe we all have a role to play in addressing the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis, and I'm fortunate to be able to champion that work within the firm.”

I'm Senior Operations & Sustainability Manager at Bates Wells, and my role is incredibly varied. I oversee the day-to-day operations of the firm to ensure we provide a seamless service to both our people and our clients, and help lead our B Corp and sustainability work.

Sustainability is something I'm personally passionate about. I believe we all have a role to play in addressing the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis, and I'm fortunate to be able to champion that work within the firm.

What does sustainability leadership look like in practice at Bates Wells?

Sustainability leadership is embedded throughout our governance, strategy and day-to-day decision-making. Senior leaders, including our Managing Partner, COO and other partners in the firm, play an active role in overseeing our sustainability objectives.

We have a Climate & Nature Board which oversees and provides strategic direction to the work of our Climate & Nature Group (which drives our environmental initiatives and sustainability strategy) and reports directly into our Management Board.

How does your role fit with this?

I manage many of our climate, nature and B Corp initiatives, helping to ensure sustainability is embedded throughout the business rather than as a standalone project. This includes project managing our Climate & Nature Group, sitting on the Climate & Nature Board, and leading our B Corp recertification process.

I supported our Strategy Steering Group as we developed a new firm-wide strategy, with planet and society at its heart. I'm also responsible for procurement and supplier relationships, so a key



part of my work is reviewing and strengthening our procurement programme to ensure our supplier selection and onboarding processes reflect our values and sustainability commitments.

What have been some of the highlights of your work?

I've run major procurement exercises for services ranging from cleaning and stationery to overflow call handling, and all seeking to appoint ethical providers. I've also managed significant workplace projects, including an office move, improvements to support hybrid working, and a firm-wide upgrade to LED lighting. Beyond operations, I serve as an Ambassador for our Disability and Carers Network, helping to deliver initiatives that promote inclusion and support across the firm.

For organisations looking to strengthen employee engagement around sustainability, where would you recommend they start?

Start by creating a climate or sustainability group. It doesn't need to be large or highly formal. The most important thing is that it's made up of people who genuinely care about the topic. Passion drives engagement, and engaged people are far more likely to turn ideas into action. Having visible support from senior leadership can also make a real difference.

How can organisations keep sustainability front of mind for employees?

Communication is key. Create a dedicated space for sustainability news within your internal communications, whether that's a newsletter, Teams channel, intranet page or noticeboard. Regular updates help people stay informed about climate issues, biodiversity, important dates such as Earth Day, and any new initiatives or policies your organisation is introducing.

How do you encourage people to contribute ideas?

Make it easy for them. Introduce suggestion schemes, like dedicated email addresses, informal conversations or even sustainability workshops and hackathons. Some of our most successful initiatives started with a single idea from a colleague. People are often inspired by what they see elsewhere, whether that's through their professional networks, climate reports or examples from other organisations – so encourage them to share.

What's the best way to inspire people to get involved?

Give them opportunities to connect with the issue directly. Activities such as tree planting, litter picks and volunteering days can be incredibly effective. Film screenings or sustainable "giveaways" can also be a great way to spark conversations. The key is helping people understand why sustainability matters and how they can contribute.

How important is recognition?

It's hugely important. Celebrating positive action helps maintain momentum and demonstrates that sustainability is valued by the organisation. At Bates Wells, we run a Climate & Nature Recognition Reward Scheme where colleagues can nominate themselves or others for initiatives that have a positive environmental impact. We've recognised everything from new recycling schemes to participation in community litter picks.

We also offer incentives such as our Green Energy scheme, which supports colleagues who switch to certified green energy at home. Rewards don't need to be expensive; often, simple recognition, sustainable gifts or additional time off can be just as meaningful.

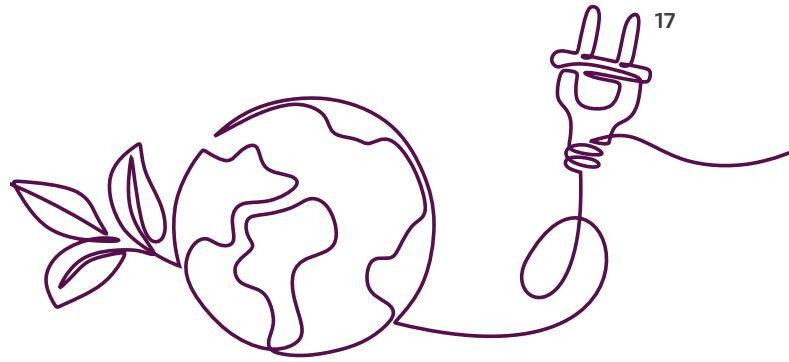
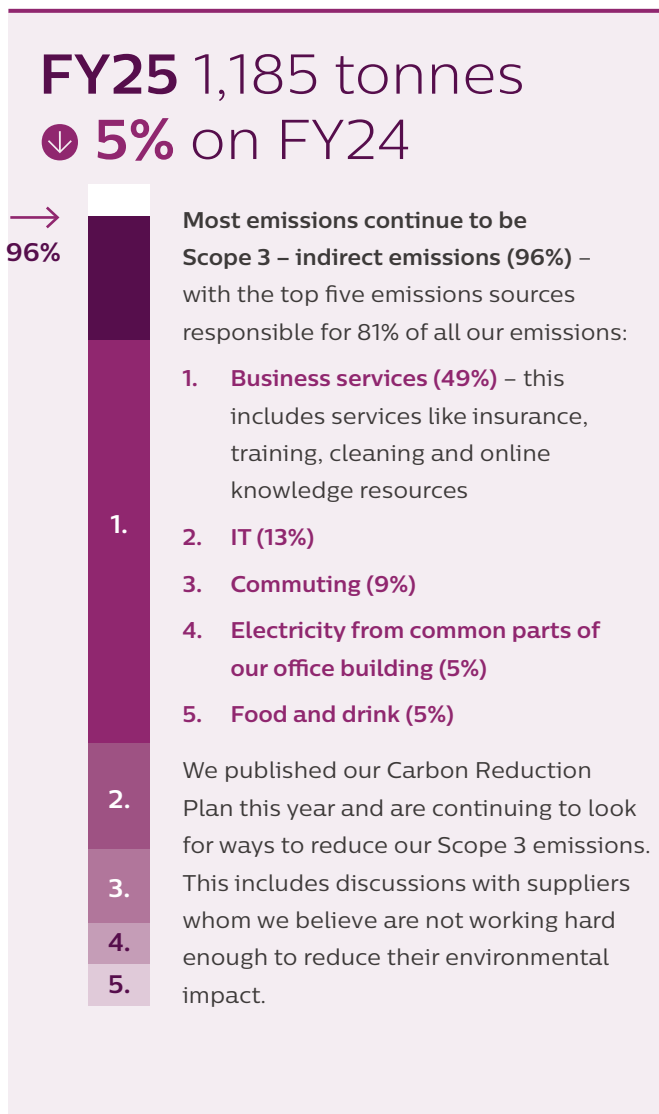
Reducing the impact of our operations

As well as working with our clients to reshape the role of nature and our impact on the planet, we're working hard to reduce our own carbon footprint in line with the Science-Based Target we set ourselves in 2023.

We're 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.

Our carbon footprint calculation

Our own emissions have decreased by 5% in comparison to FY24. Our intensity has decreased by 9.8% per full time employee and 11.7% per £ million of turnover.



Offsetting our carbon footprint

With our confirmed carbon footprint of **1,185 tonnes**, we've taken steps to offset this through projects focused on community regeneration and environmental impact. This year, we partnered with Climate Impact Partners (CIP), Ecologi, and Protect Earth to balance our footprint across several initiatives:

- **CIP – Improved water infrastructure (435 tonnes)** Repairing and drilling boreholes to provide clean drinking water in rural communities across Uganda, Malawi, Rwanda, and Eritrea.
- **CIP – Circular economy composting (200 tonnes)** Diverting organic waste in Kenya to composting facilities, creating agricultural compost and reducing landfill impact.
- **Ecologi – Community carbon avoidance (350 tonnes)** Distributing improved cookstoves in Kenya, reducing emissions and improving health outcomes.
- **Ecologi – Nature-based carbon avoidance (100 tonnes)** Protecting the Amazon rainforest through monitoring, research, and local economic development.
- **Ecologi – Blue carbon removal (100 tonnes)** Mangrove reforestation and community support in Pakistan.
- **Protect Earth – Tree planting donation** Planting 500 trees in Bath, fostering local engagement and capturing an additional 175 tonnes of carbon over 50 years.

We will continue with this business critical project and update you on progress next year.

Conclusion

This year's report demonstrates that meaningful environmental impact is achieved through a sustained commitment to changing systems, behaviours and decision-making. Across our client work and our own operations, we have continued to challenge conventional approaches, helping to place nature, future generations and long-term resilience at the heart of governance, investment and organisational strategy.

We are pleased with the progress we have made. From innovative Nature on the Board governance models and supporting woodland creation projects, to helping shape the future of sustainable fashion and reducing further our own operational emissions, we are proving that legal expertise can be a powerful force for environmental and social change. At the same time, we recognise that there is still much more to do.

The environmental challenges facing society are complex and interconnected. They require collaboration, innovation and a willingness to rethink established systems. As advisers, we have a unique opportunity to help our clients navigate this transition and to ensure that legal frameworks enable, rather than hinder, positive change.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to reducing our environmental footprint, meeting our science-based targets, and championing nature-positive solutions. We also recognise that creating lasting impact depends on people. In next year's report we will focus on how we're supporting our people and helping our clients do the same. From governance and leadership to organisational culture, workforce

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Creating lasting impact is not a destination. It is an ongoing responsibility.

Sally Procopis
Chief Operating Officer

wellbeing and responsible business practices, we will continue to work alongside our clients to protect, develop and empower our people, ensuring we have the foundations needed to deliver sustainable impact over the long term.

Most importantly, we will continue to use our influence, expertise and platform to help build an economy that creates long-term value for people, communities and the natural world. Because creating lasting impact is not a destination. It is an ongoing responsibility.



BatesWells

We're a different kind of law firm with impact at our heart. We were the first UK law firm to become a B Corp – balancing our decisions on our people, clients, suppliers, community, and the environment with making a profit – and are the highest scoring global law firm in the B Corp community.

Our pragmatic legal advice is coupled with a will to influence positive social and environmental change in law, policy and practice.

We're globally recognised as the market leading firm for charities and impact-driven organisations and work with business clients wanting cost effective, pragmatic legal advice from a law firm that cares.

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