

An Agenda for Change

Responsible business report 2022

Responsible business | Empowering sustainable growth



A message from Sara Bailey, Senior Partner

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Welcome to An Agenda for Change

I'm so pleased to welcome you to *An Agenda for Change*, the first ever Responsible Business Report from Trowers & Hamlins.

Here we describe, in greater detail than we have done before, how we are tackling the environmental, social and governance (ESG) agenda which continues to grip the business community.

However, we see no value in just talking about these issues. Unless we make ourselves accountable for the commitments we make and the targets we set, there will be no real change. We are ready to take responsibility for this even if, at times, the ride is uncomfortable.

Our responsible business strategy spans the five years to 2027, but these challenges are not fixed.

We will need to be fleet of foot as they develop, and as new challenges emerge. Change in the next five years will be profound, but will be much deeper in the decades beyond.

It starts with people

Soon after I was elected Senior Partner, in 2021, we developed what I call the 5Ps – people, profitability, purpose, partnership and place.

These are the priorities that underpin our business strategy and guide how we operate, so we are able to deliver sustainable growth and lasting change for the benefit of our people, our clients and wider society.

At Trowers, our approach to responsibility starts with people.

We have a high performance culture, and we are financially strong. But we've never chased profit at the expense of the wellbeing of our people.

We have a diverse client base spanning both private and public sector organisations, and this gives us a different perspective. We look to create practical and cost-effective solutions built around lasting relationships with our clients. In a phrase, we are commercial problem solvers.

We are a more diverse firm than many of our peers in the legal profession and have always striven to be inclusive.

And none of us thinks Trowers exists in a bubble. We take our place as part of a wider community, looking to create real social value through our work, thought leadership and extensive community programmes.





Culture

Although we are immensely proud of our culture, we've always been a little coy when it comes to describing it.

I think this needs to change.

But how do you put a culture into words – words that are coherent and authentic?

We've found it's best to start by giving colleagues the floor, encouraging them to say, in their own words, how they experience our culture, what attracted them to Trowers and what keeps them here.

As you'll read, our probing values project has uncovered a remarkable level of consistency in how people's own values match the values they see at work.

Many tell stories similar to my own.

When I arrived at Trowers in 1990, I was a bit of an anomaly – from the north and state school educated.

But what I quickly realised was that Trowers was actually interested in me.

I wasn't taken on to tick boxes. They weren't scared that I didn't look like a conventional City lawyer. I've stayed here because I can be myself.

Being a woman was never an issue. Women were already well represented in the firm and there were many brilliant role models for me. In each of the seats I took up as a trainee, my supervisor was a woman.

That still isn't the norm in our profession and, sometimes, I have to pinch myself and remember not to be complacent about the fantastic levels of gender diversity at Trowers, where today 39% of our partners are women.

We can be so much better

This report is not an exercise in self-congratulation. While we are proud of what we have achieved, we are challenging ourselves to go much further.

I'll give you three examples.

Our new diversity and inclusion strategy goes beyond an ambition to be leaders in our profession. Instead, we want to reflect the diversity we see in the outside world.

We actively support a number of schemes to improve social mobility in our profession, but we need to make much greater progress on this in our ranks, through our graduate recruitment programme and through lateral hires.

We face tough challenges around managing our environmental impact, the most significant relating to our buildings and business travel.

We have a net zero strategy and we will soon reveal the trajectory we will pursue to get there, backed by clear targets. None of us underestimate the task here, but we refuse to green wash our achievements.

In many respects we are just taking our first steps.

But I hope this report will leave you in no doubt at all how serious our strategy is and how determined we are to bring about change.



Sara Bailey

Sara Bailey, Senior Partner

Our responsible business strategy

Our responsible business strategy covers the actions we are taking over the next five years. It is focused on five key areas (how we do business, people, community, environment and governance and accountability) to ensure that we operate sustainably and in line with the ESG agenda.

These are early days for our strategy, yet in many ways we start from a strong position. But our strategy recognises that we still have a long way to go.

We need to make some big changes and be up front about where our challenges lie.

How we do business

- A strong internal culture underpinned by our core values.
- Striking a balance between creating a high performance culture and operating responsibly.
- Committed to high ethical standards.

People

- We have always been an inclusive organisation.
- New diversity and inclusion strategy backed by clear targets.
- Well-being programmes focused on physical, mental, financial and social health.
- Emphasis on learning and development, encouraging all colleagues to gain new skills and qualifications throughout their careers.

Community

- Committed to creating social value in the communities where we live and work.
- Focussed on three priority areas:
 - Communities close to our offices
 - Children and young people
 - Fairness and access to justice

Environment

- On a pathway to net zero, with a commitment to reduce 50% of our baseline emissions by 2030 and 90% by 2050.
- Committed to delivering our legal services in the most sustainable way that we can.
- Working with our supply chain to understand and manage the impact of our operations.

Governance and accountability

- Governance systems to hold us accountable for the commitments we make and targets we set.
- Transparent reporting on our progress.
- Risk management and compliance.

How we do business

High performance and responsibility – how we strike the balance.

Increasingly clients, colleagues, the talented people we want to recruit and other important stakeholders demand to know how our responsible business strategy will work within a culture of high performance.

In pursuing our responsible business strategy, we start in a strong position.

Aspects of the ever-expanding ESG and sustainability agenda have been part of our culture and our values for many years.

As a firm we've always been focused on creating social value, through our client work, our thought leadership and our extensive involvement in the communities where we live and work.

Our TrowersIncludes diversity and inclusion programme has differentiated us in our sector, not least because of the high proportion of women in our partnership, our approach to flexible working and our determination to foster a rich diversity of ideas and perspectives.

#TrowersIncludes Supporting diversity & inclusion

We have a highly collaborative way of working with each other and our clients, which has enabled us to create a high performance environment while still putting the wellbeing and development of our people first.

“For me, TrowersIncludes is going above and beyond your usual working day to help educate, fundraise, collaborate and share experiences. Being part of the incredible culture we have at Trowers means a lot to me, it creates a great ethos and sense of community in the workplace.”



Reece Hopkins, Graphic Designer – Birmingham

A sea change in attitudes

In the last few years, we have seen a sea change in attitudes, and we are under growing pressure to spell out what being a responsible business really means to us.

In particular we have seen it in our client work, as the organisations we work with sharpen their own focus on ESG and sustainability issues.

They are now asking much more challenging questions about our approach to sustainability, inclusion and creating social value, and want to know how this is embedded in our governance structures and targets and how it is reflected in our culture and values.

Our people, and those who we want to recruit and retain in the future, are looking to find a purpose in the work they do. They want to work for organisations that share their broader social values.

A fresh and deeper look at our values

Our Strategic Board decided towards the end of 2021 to undertake a review of our values, with a view to articulating them in a way that really reflected how people across Trowers experience our culture.

We saw this as an opportunity to take a really close look at ourselves and celebrate what makes our culture strong.

“The fact we have a culture where everyone can be their true self is massively powerful. The business appreciates people being themselves and can see the benefit of it. That means we can harness talent, channel it and celebrate it.”



Yetunde Dania, Partner and
Head of Office – Birmingham

In our own words

Working with external agency, Brands with Values (BwV), we surveyed the opinions of all our people to figure out the words which best described our culture.

The results bowled us over. The positivity and degree of alignment and cohesion across the firm was remarkable – with our results exceeding the averages typically associated with businesses like ours. Both in terms of the similarity between the values of our people and the values of our senior leadership, as well as the cultural health of our firm which was determined by looking at the percentage of “unhealthy” words selected to describe our culture.

“The results of the survey were clear – at Trowers we align a strong, supportive culture with a high performing, driven and ambitious business.”



Paul Marco, Managing Partner – London

“The cultural health score was very, very high and the numbers around belonging were well above the average. That’s very impressive for an organisation of this size.”



Martin Roach, Founder, Brands with Values

Articulating our values

Following the results of the survey, BwV held further workshops and discussions which were used to develop our four brand pillars below.

Over the next 12 months, we will be working to embed the values in all areas across our business.

One of our first priorities is to embed our values into our appraisal system and begin using this as a measure of performance. For example, using our balance scorecard framework for partners, we are able to assess how our values are reflected in their work, attitude and behaviours.

We collaborate

- We believe in each of our people and the value they add.
- We are open.
- Cross-team working keeps us sharp and our solutions smart.

We savour success

- We measure success in many ways.
- We succeed by living our values, in the way we do things and the way we treat people.
- We are recognised for the quality of our work.

We are driven by innovation

- We are agile.
- We are solution-driven, finding new ways to succeed.

We’re not afraid to be human

- Everyone’s different, nobody’s perfect and we embrace that.
- We are honest and hardworking.
- By recognising each other, we’re each proud to belong.

“Looking back, I joined Trowers because I felt they’d be willing to embrace me as I was, rather than expect me to be some kind of stereotype.”



Jeremy Ingham, International Managing Partner – Bahrain



Cultural health: Only 10% of words selected during the survey were “unhealthy”.



Cultural distance: Similarity between values of our people and our senior leadership

Standards of behaviour

We expect our people to meet the very highest standards in their professional practice. We won't tolerate high performing individuals who behave badly.

We take a balanced approach to assess performance and promotion potential to make sure that those who progress through the business reflect our culture and values in their attitudes and behaviour.

“It would be challenging to balance high performance with our values if we had traditionally spent time chasing the highest profit and being blasé about ethics and standards of behaviour. But it has never been like that. We’ve never been an “eat what you kill” culture. So, although striking that balance is a challenge, our starting point is different.”



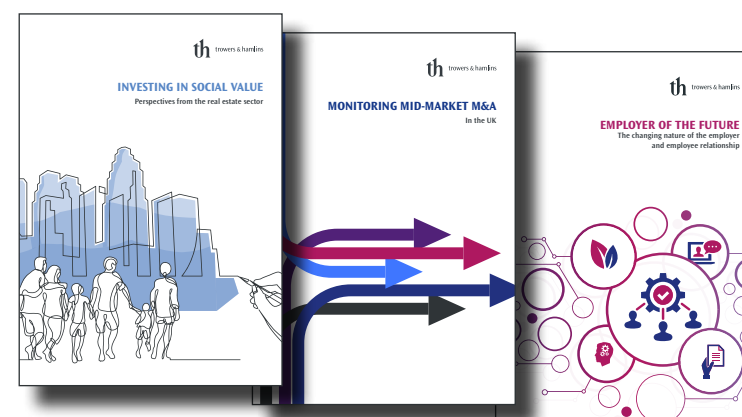
Adrian Carter, Managing Partner – London

Clients – turning challenges into opportunities

As our responsible business strategy evolves, we see enormous opportunities to work collaboratively with our clients, including learning from those who are ahead of us in pursuing this agenda. But for many, the process has only just begun and we are actively looking to see how we can help them on their way.

To support this objective, we have established a Responsible Business Taskforce, tasked with developing and embedding responsible business principles in our service offering. To find out more about the taskforce, please [click here](#).

In addition, the taskforce will be looking at how we can support our clients through our thought leadership programme, bringing important people together to share ideas and debate issues through events, articles in the specialist press and podcasts.



We are working from a strong base in this area. We have a tradition of forming close and lasting relationships with clients, often working directly with owner-managers, CEOs and other people in leadership positions in the organisations we work with.

In the last few years we’ve established a powerful programme of thought leadership, including research with the [Social Market Foundation](#) looking at the influence of ESG and responsible business issues on the decisions property investors are making.

In a recent [M&A survey](#), one of the pulse reports we pulled out looked at how ESG is influencing volumes of and behaviours in M&A transactions. For example, it considered how companies looking to be acquired can prepare for the likely ESG demands that will be made by prospective buyers.

Our podcast series “[Positive Influencers](#)”, often hosted by our senior partner, Sara Bailey, has also tackled a wide range of responsible business and sustainability challenges, including mental health, social value and community development.

Ethical challenges

But we also see some clear ethical challenges emerging around the markets we work in and the clients we act for, which need to be weighed and balanced very carefully.

As we continue to grow, we will need to balance our commercial need to be represented in key markets against any reputational risks that might arise.

We won't simply rule out advising clients in particular sectors, for example, but as part of our client due diligence process, we would look closely at the ESG-related plans and commitments they have made before taking a view. This is not a straightforward process, but it is one that we are committed to getting right both now and in the future.

People

Taking diversity and inclusion to a new level.

We're really proud to have a culture that is widely seen as diverse and highly inclusive. But our brand new strategy, built on more robust data and backed by clear targets, is recognition that we can do so much more.

For many years, the championing of diversity and inclusion has been at the heart of our culture, an intrinsic part of life at Trowers & Hamlins and one that sets us apart in the stories colleagues and clients tell about the firm.

Championing gender equality

Even in the past when women were barely represented in the law, colleagues tell stories of the many strong role models at Trowers who inspired younger women. Indeed, the first ever woman admitted to the England and Wales Roll was a Trowers' solicitor. That was in 1919. Fast forward, to 2021, when Sara Bailey was elected Senior Partner, succeeding Jennie Gubbins making Trowers the first firm to have two successive female Senior Partners.

In the UK, we have been reporting on our gender pay gap for the past five years, and overall our mean pay gap has continued to reduce for a fourth consecutive year across all staff. Our [2022 Pay Gap Report](#) breaks down this information and provides further analysis, so that a greater understanding of our pay gap can be achieved.

Ethnic representation and inclusion

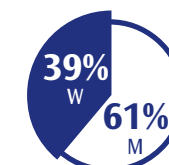
While representation of colleagues from an ethnic minority background is higher across our UK offices than the UK population, three of our offices are based in the most diverse cities in the UK. This is why our targets are designed to better reflect this level of representation particularly at more senior levels across the business. An important factor in achieving this is our talent pipeline.

Yet, until now, successes like these have been achieved with relatively little active intervention. Traditionally we've been driven by a shared desire to create a diverse and inclusive workplace, rather than by a more structured, strategic approach.

“We champion diversity and are very diverse, but have always done it more by desire than design. Now we are saying: we've got something amazing here – let's have a framework that makes it absolutely clear where we are and what we want to be, as a diverse and inclusive business.”



Sharron Webster, Partner and
Head of Diversity and Inclusion – London



*Split of **women to men**
across our partnership.*



*Across the whole partnership the
mean gender pay gap is **1.1%**
in favour of women.*



*In 2021, **46% of trainees** were from
an **ethnic minority background.***



*In 2022, of our 10 promoted
partners had an **equal split** of men
and women, and **40%** were from an
ethnic minority background.*

Reflecting society as a whole

Our vision today is to create a diverse and inclusive environment in which everyone has equality of opportunity.

We're aiming higher than just being leaders in our profession. Instead we want to achieve a level of diversity that reflects the jurisdictions in which we operate.

Our strategy covers the five years to 2027 and includes a series of targets to tackle underrepresentation in key areas revealed by our data.

Our Strategic Board will review the strategy periodically, identifying and celebrating our successes and being open about where challenges remain. We will not shy away from publishing data even if we have not achieved the targets we have set ourselves.

Leadership and accountability of this sort is absolutely crucial. But so is the full participation of people across the firm.

We know not everyone can be an activist. But we do expect all our colleagues to play an active part in delivering the strategy.

Targeting change

In June 2022, our Strategic Board agreed, for the first time, to set measurable targets to focus our efforts and drive change. Our strategy encompasses two types of targets – focused on addressing the areas of greatest underrepresentation across the business and improving the completeness of our data.

Representation targets

In some areas, we are in a strong position, but there are others where we believe we are underperforming. To address this, we have set the following targets:

-  **Increase representation of female partners across the partnership from 39% to 42% by 2026.**
-  **Increase representation of black fee-earners across our UK offices from 3% to no less than 6% by 2026.**
-  **Increase representation of black colleagues in business services roles across our UK offices from 5% to no less than 7% by 2026.**

Data collection targets

We see data as critical to the success of this strategy. We are committed to better understanding why disclosure is lower among certain groups and do all we can to encourage greater disclosure. This objective is supported by the following targets.

-  **Set representation targets with regards to socio-economic diversity over the next 12 months.**
-  **Implement system to capture more diverse gender identity data within 12 months.**
-  **Increase disclosure of sexual orientation in the UK to at least 80% over the next 6 months.**
-  **Set appropriate sexual orientation representation targets over the next 12 months.**

Over the course of our five-year strategy these targets will be kept under review by our Strategic Board to make sure they continue to address our main challenges. Other targets may be added should new challenges emerge. We will report openly on our progress each year.

“Working with an incredible mosaic of colleagues where all the different pieces are supported equally. Where for me I really can be a successful mother, wife and a partner all at the same time.”



Debbie Howard, Partner – Bahrain

“Nothing feels forced, from my experience all the diversity initiatives have always been genuinely representative of and driven by people who care about their colleagues.”



Julian Jarrett, Associate and Deputy Head of Diversity and Inclusion – London

“Towers’ diversity and inclusion efforts go beyond the traditional realms. Our philosophy is also rooted in diversity of thought. There is always that sense of purpose and belonging at work – which I really appreciate.”



Cassandra Lim, Senior Associate – Malaysia

Our networks are driving change

Our eight diversity and inclusion networks play a vital role in awareness building through special events often tied to important dates in the diversity calendar, such as Pride, International Women's Day, Black History Month and major religious festivals.

Often outside speakers will come in to take part, but we have a great record for providing safe spaces for colleagues to share their own stories and experiences, and these, often very personal, real life stories tend to be the most powerful in increasing awareness and understanding.

Our networks have been increasingly active in developing and delivering our diversity and inclusion strategy.

Our eight networks are:

- Allyship
- Gender, Family and Work
- International
- LGBTQ+ and Allies network
- Physical and Mental Wellbeing
- Race, Ethnicity and Heritage
- Religion and Belief
- Social Mobility

Recently, our Gender, Family and Work network hosted an internal webinar where the panel came together to share their stories and raise awareness of the different family types we have within the firm.

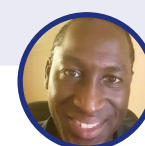
“It has really struck me how people here aren't afraid to show that they've got a vulnerable side. Regardless of seniority, there is not the feeling that there is this armour that people need to wear to be successful.”



Jacqui Bernuzzi, Reward and Wellbeing Manager – London

Our Race, Ethnicity and Heritage network have also launched a Race Action plan which aims to address racial equity within the firm. As part of the plan we have adopted a more equitable system to recruit trainees from different backgrounds and provided training for our leaders on how to manage more inclusively.

“Our Race Action Plan is a clear example of the approach we take to being a responsible business. Actions such as adopting a more equitable system to recruit trainees from different backgrounds and providing training on how to manage more inclusively ensure that colleagues' differences are valued and that everyone is able to thrive at Trowers.”



Reg Amoah, Interim Diversity and Inclusion Manager – London

Contextualised recruitment

We are now using contextualised recruitment in our graduate programme. This technology, hosted by Rare Recruitment, allows us to assess candidates' achievements and potential against a range of socio-economic factors and indicators of relative disadvantage relating to different postcodes, schools and universities. Already it is helping us get a much better picture of people's ability and potential.



Creating a safe and healthy place to work

We work in a high performance environment, committed to delivering the highest quality of service to our clients. But we cannot hope to sustain that commitment unless our people have a safe, healthy and respectful working environment where they can realise their full potential.

Safeguarding the wellbeing of our staff is a critical part of our “people first” approach.

We have long embraced flexible working to help colleagues achieve a balance between their work and personal lives, and we have a full and progressive offering around maternity, paternity and, now, shared parental leave.

“Our basic ethos is this: we understand and have long accepted that people’s contribution will differ at different times according to what’s going on elsewhere in their lives and colleagues are encouraged to work flexibly at key points of their careers.”



Paul Robinson, Director of HR – London

Embracing flexibility put us in a strong position as we navigated the pandemic and, later, when we moved to hybrid working.

Despite huge uncertainty as the pandemic took hold, we made an explicit commitment that there would be no Covid-related redundancies – a commitment that we stuck firmly to.

Our approach was recognised when we were named HR Firm of the Year in the People in Law Awards 2021. The judges commended us for staying true to our “people first” agenda, using a creative and empathetic approach to keep people “employed, engaged and productive throughout an incredibly challenging and uncertain year.”

Continuous learning and development

We run an extensive programme of learning and development, actively encouraging all colleagues to keep learning new skills throughout their careers.

Our programme includes the full range of traditional legal training and this is bolstered by an extensive skills training programme tailored to the wide variety of legal and business roles we offer across the firm, including supporting those who want to gain additional professional qualifications.

For example, we’re proud of the training and development we offer to our paralegals, helping many of them to gain qualifications through CILEx. We were nominated and won multiple awards at the National Paralegal Awards 2021, including Best Law Firm for Paralegal Development.

“Trowers provides a really supportive atmosphere for me as an apprentice to grow both personally and within my own skill set and career.”



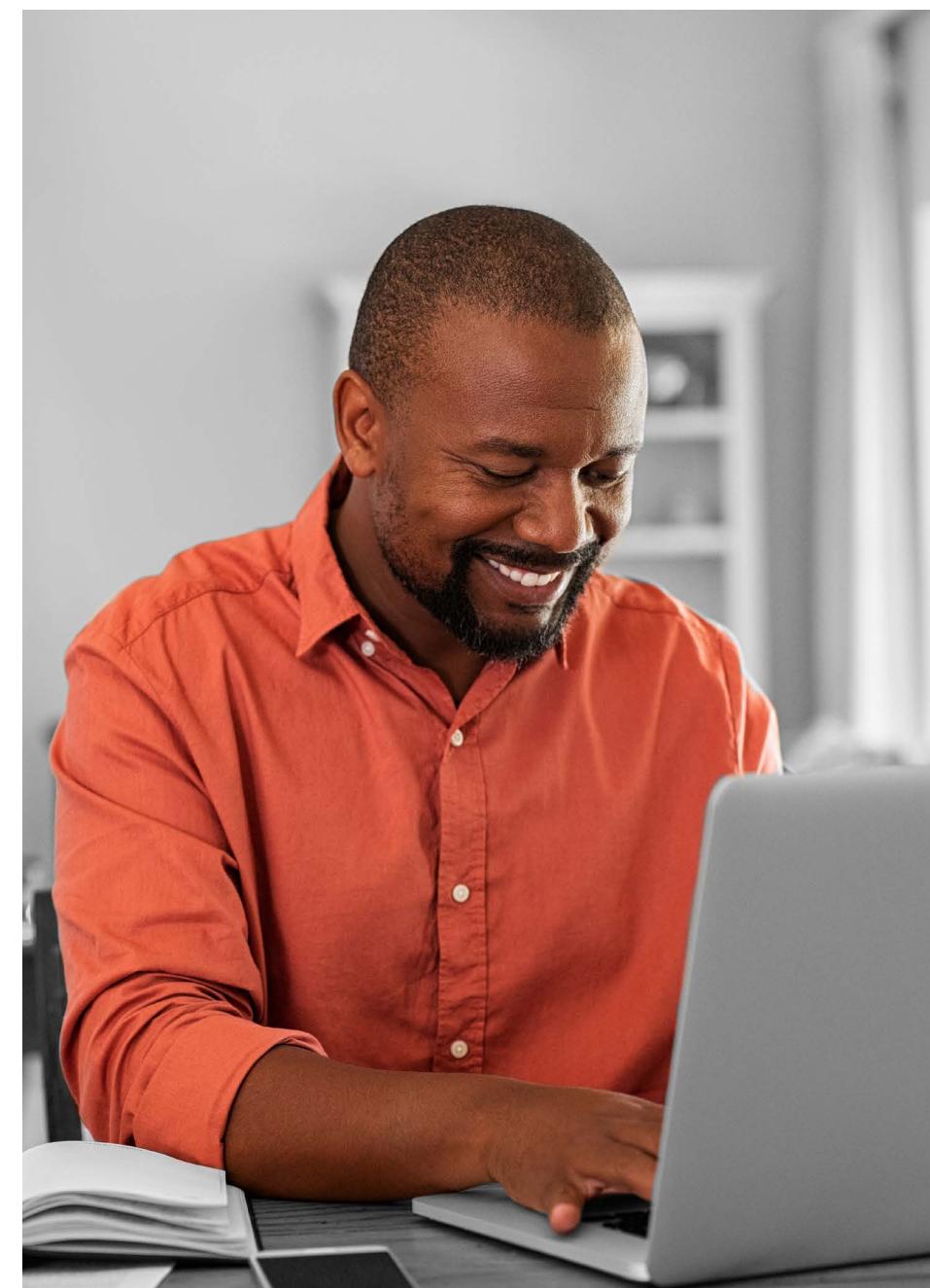
Haider Malik, Paralegal – Birmingham

We put a big effort into developing future partners through our award-winning Pathways to Partnership programme. The two-year programme, launched in 2019, equips senior and managing associates with the skills required to make a success of their eventual promotion to partner and won the Excellence in Talent Management award at the People in Law Awards 2020.

“The Pathways to Partnership programme, while challenging, is a really enriching experience, particularly the coaching sessions, which have been invaluable.”



Raya Al Harthy, Senior Associate – Oman



Promoting wellbeing

For some years we have focused on four main aspects of wellbeing.

Physical health and wellbeing – encouraging colleagues to stay fit and healthy in a proactive way, particularly through our Vitality health insurance scheme which rewards members for being active and healthy living.

Mental wellbeing – as in many businesses this has risen rapidly up our wellbeing agenda in the last 10 years and is now a top priority. Recently, for instance, we have begun offering fortnightly mindfulness training as well as tailored programmes for groups, such as partners, whose take up on mental health initiatives has previously been lower than the general firm population.

We have also built upon our pre-pandemic hybrid working policy to give individuals greater freedom and flexibility to make decisions about where they work. However, we also recognise that our offices are an important place for collaboration, learning and socialising. Our policy balances these considerations, upholding our commitment to supporting a positive work-life balance for our people and maintaining service delivery for our clients.

“Our new partner wellbeing programme focuses on a range of topics, including sleep and insomnia and cardiovascular and brain health. We are also hosting a session to educate partners on how they can role model good wellbeing and support others with their wellbeing.”



John Worrall, Head of Learning and Development – London

“Our new hybrid policy looks to find the balance between the individual’s needs and the needs of the business. From speaking with colleagues, it is clear that people are enjoying the flexibility of home and office working.”



Helen Whatmough, Human Resources Manager – Manchester

Financial health – focusing on financial education around such things as pensions. Recently, we ran a series of internal talks to educate our people on their pensions and create an opportunity for them to ask questions and seek guidance from external pension consultants.

Social health – taking steps to help people build great, mutually supportive social and working relationships with colleagues and clients. We have a thriving mentoring scheme with about a third of the firm taking part. We try to offer mentoring to people at critical times in their careers and life. For many years we’ve supported those wanting to start a family, during maternity or shared parental leave and as they contemplate a return to work.

“Staff wellbeing is truly important to Trowers. We recognise how crucial it is and have fostered an inclusive and flexible working environment where we support and value each other. I am proud of the firm’s continued commitment to wellbeing and it is championed by all.”



Imogen Reseigh, Senior Associate – London

Community

Bringing real value to local communities.

Our well-established Corporate Social Responsibility programme plays an important role in our efforts to create social value in the sectors we serve, the communities we work in and in society at large.

We believe we have an important role to play in bringing real value to the communities we live and work in.

This philosophy has for many years underpinned our extensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme and our approach to providing pro bono legal services, and it is a fundamental part of our responsible business and ESG agenda.

“To be socially responsible and successful is not a case of either/or – both go absolutely hand in hand.”



Nicola Ihnatowicz, Partner and Chair of CSR Committee – London

We encourage people across all offices to get involved in our community and pro bono programmes and are lucky that so many colleagues share an ambition to give back to society.

We are never short of suggestions of where we should invest our time and resources.

Indeed, one of our biggest challenges is ensuring we use the resources at our disposal to achieve the greatest impact. We can't be all things to all people, but we can achieve great things by channeling our energies carefully.

Increasingly we are embedding this approach to community into how we recruit, retain, reward and promote colleagues.

Staff appraisals include objectives on making an additional contribution and adding value beyond day-to-day work and it plays a part when we assess the performance of people looking to progress to partnership.

Priorities and local focus

Over the years we've focused on three CSR priorities:

- Supporting local communities close to where we work
- Supporting children and young people
- Ensuring fairness and access to justice.

These categories allow us to tailor our CSR approach according to local priorities while providing overall direction from our firm-wide CSR Committee.

The charities we currently support include:

- **London** – Advance, a charity providing confidential support for women facing imminent danger from domestic violence; and The Frank Haines Memorial Trust providing support to charities working with disadvantaged young people in Tower Hamlets.
- **Birmingham** – We've supported Edward's Trust, a charity helping children and families deal with bereavement and loss, for three years.
- **Manchester** – We continue to support Manchester Mind, a partnership of five local Minds around the city, which focuses on reducing the stigma that still exists around mental health.
- **Exeter** – We support the British Ukrainian Aid, a charity supporting victims of the conflict in Ukraine.
- **Internationally** – We have raised funds in support of an assortment of local and global charities and initiatives, including the Sparkles Foundation

“Trowers takes CSR very seriously and is passionate about giving back to local communities. The whole process is a true reflection of the firm's values and culture.”



Sabah Shah, Associate – London

Social mobility

We are really proud to support a wide range of initiatives aimed at improving social mobility and broadening the diversity of young people represented in our sector.

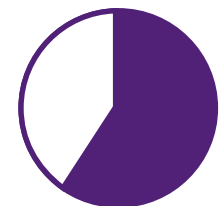
The legal profession still has huge issues around access, with entry to the law heavily favouring people from more privileged backgrounds.

This has to change. It's important for justice and the working of society and the economy that lawyers reflect the wider world we are part of and serve.

We were among the firms that founded **Prime**, a profession-wide scheme offering young people from disadvantaged backgrounds valuable work experience opportunities and an insight into life in a City law firm they would not normally be able to access.

City Solicitors Horizons identifies a number of students from universities across the South East of England each year and offers them the chance to join a three-year programme running alongside their degree courses. Participants enjoy classroom and one-to-one training, individual mentoring and work experience. We are one of a number of leading law firms piloting the scheme.

We are an affiliate partner of **Aspiring Solicitors**, an organisation committed to increasing diversity by helping disadvantaged young people gain work experience and training contracts. We host open days, attend law fairs and provide mentors for participants.



In 2021, 58% of trainees were recruited from the Aspiring Solicitors scheme.

We were the first law firm to partner with Exeter University's **Access to Justice Clinic**, a pro bono legal service where law students at the university advise members of the public, providing supervision and guidance to the students.

“We want the best talent whatever background you come from. It makes sense to cast our net as wide as possible and not to discriminate – to look past where someone stands now and see what their potential is.”



Rory Stracey, Partner – Exeter

Other initiatives we support



Bringing our legal skills to bear through Pro Bono

Our lawyers welcome the chance to do pro bono work, where they can use their legal skills to bring real value to communities and individuals at home and abroad.

We encourage them to do just that, insisting that the projects they support are carefully monitored and supervised, with their time properly recorded.

We are signatories to the Law Society's pro bono charter.

One of our most valued pro bono projects is Advocates for International Development (A4ID), a charity that works with leading international law firms to provide free legal advice to NGOs and other development organisations.

We have renewed our partnership with the organisation for another year, and the list of our lawyers signed up for weekly newsletters on A4ID projects continues to grow.

Environment

Plotting the path to net zero.

As an international law firm, with offices across the UK, the Middle East and Asia, achieving net zero will be tough. Our new strategy provides a realistic trajectory to meet this challenge.



We are on a pathway to net zero*, with a commitment to reduce 50% of our baseline emissions by 2030 and 90% by 2050.

Although we have traditionally collected data on our environmental performance for audit purposes, clients are now asking for much more detailed information on our ESG performance, with the climate crisis a key concern.

We are being asked far more searching questions by clients about our own environmental impact and our sustainability strategy, as they look to work with suppliers who share their own carbon-cutting ambitions and goals.

We face other pressures too. In the UK, the government's 2050 net zero target places us, and all the organisations that make up our value chain, under an obligation to make rapid progress on cutting carbon.

Public pressure for climate action has grown significantly and increasingly our employees and the talented people we want to recruit demand that we play our full part in addressing the climate crisis and rightly so.

“You get businesses that say they are net zero. But there are various ways to fudge this. We don’t want to fall into the “greenwash” trap, saying we’ve achieved something and then falling back on all sorts of legalistic clarifications and caveats. We are determined to be transparent.”



Chris Paul, Partner and Chair of Sustainability Committee – London

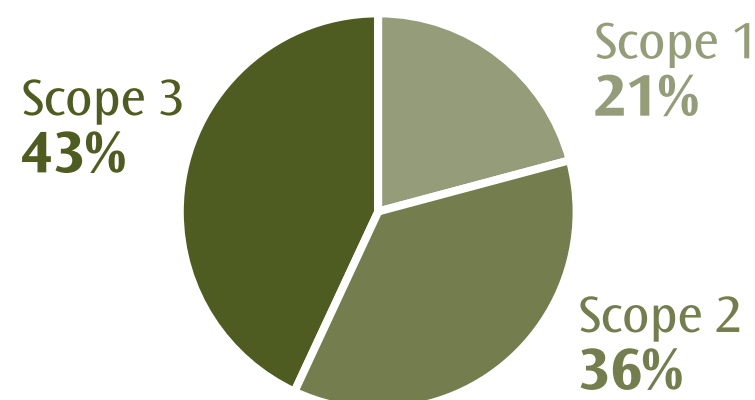
*As defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and aligned with the Paris Agreement 2015.

Mapping our carbon footprint

To set us on the right trajectory, we needed to establish our baseline carbon footprint.

Drawing on expert external advice from Achill Management, an environmental consultancy that works widely across the legal industry and other sectors, we have two years of carbon footprint data and they are now helping us to plot our trajectory to net zero – an ambition that they believe is realistic and achievable.

Carbon footprint 2021/22



Benchmarks and best practice

We have joined the Legal Sustainability Alliance (LSA), a collection of more than 130 law firms who joined forces just before the pandemic to share information and best practice. Being part of the LSA has given us an important benchmark to understand where we currently stand compared with our peers.

Our challenges

Our data shows that we face two main challenges in reducing our footprint – purchased electricity and business travel (including flights, taxis and hotel stays).

In setting our targets we will obviously look to cut emissions in these two areas considerably, increasing our use of renewable energy, for instance, and planning international travel more efficiently.

But we need to strike a balance. Since the pandemic, many of our UK clients are comfortable to conduct a good proportion of meetings virtually. But in other jurisdictions clients still expect meetings to be face-to-face – it's just part of local business culture. The move to hybrid working also means we require less office space, as we now work more flexibly.

Working closely with our suppliers allows us to make important incremental savings. For instance, we are moving from daily to weekly deliveries of stationery and records, a move that will help to chip away at our emissions although may not reduce our costs.

Just as our clients are asking more detailed questions of us so that they can understand how their supply chain is contributing to their overall carbon footprint, so we are beginning to do the same with our own suppliers. That means we need to follow through on our commitments by working with our supply chain to gain a full picture of our scope 3 emissions.

“Being a responsible business means having ambitious metrics in place, such as setting a net zero strategy, to establish quantifiable and transparent ways to measure our progress on this issue.”



Karie Akeelah, Partner – Dubai

What we've achieved already

Reporting against our 2019/20 baseline, we are pleased to announce:

	21%	reduction in our emissions
	94%	reduction in paper consumption
	84%	reduction in emissions generated by business travel

Culture change

Achieving net zero is not just a technical challenge; it's a cultural one too.

A vital aspect of our strategy is getting buy-in from colleagues to achieve our sustainability goals and Achill Management will be running a series of workshops across the firm to help with this process.

We know that we will only succeed if we all work together to achieve our target and we've made it clear that our sustainability strategy will have an impact on all parts of the business.

We will also look to set localised targets covering our offices, departments and work streams to enhance accountability and to make sure that when teams set budgets or measure their own performance, they place equal importance on using both financial and sustainability metrics.

Governance and accountability

Demonstrating a real commitment to responsibility.

Providing tangible proof that we are living and breathing our commitment to being a responsible business means creating a robust governance system that holds us properly to account for the commitments we make.

One of our biggest challenges in pursuing our responsible business agenda is creating a system of governance that holds us genuinely accountable for the commitments we make and the targets we set.

Overall accountability for the delivery of our responsible business strategy is held by our Strategic Board. To support this, our Management Committee is responsible for setting policy and providing leadership. We have established a new Responsible Business Group which oversees a series of committees comprising a leader supported by a core strategic group and a wider working group focussed on delivering our Agenda for Change strategy in a number of areas including:

- Sustainability
- Diversity and inclusion
- People and values
- Community
- Clients

We are committed to being fully accountable for the commitments we make and the targets we set, which means being transparent and reporting our progress for our colleagues, clients and other stakeholders to see.

If we fall short in meeting targets we will say so, viewing any missed target as an opportunity to learn and improve, rather than as a sign of failure.



A complex set of challenges

The sheer diversity of our client base – encompassing high net worth individuals, private sector companies and investors, and a rich array of public sector clients – means we are dealing with a wide variety of compliance requirements and risk appetites.

Risk management and compliance is a fast expanding and increasingly complex field requiring careful management and ever-greater resources. Our responsible business strategy will force us to ask even more searching questions about our clients and our suppliers.

We have a well-honed approach to on-boarding clients and suppliers. Our “Know Your Customer” (KYC) procedures allow us to analyse a range of factors including jurisdictional risk, sanctions, anti-money laundering and conflict of interest. We have similar “Know Your Supplier” procedures to manage our supply chain.

The standards we meet

As a firm we are accredited to two important standards.

The way we manage our practice is measured against Lexcel, a quality standard demanded by many of our clients that mirrors many of the requirements we are under from the Solicitors’ Regulatory Authority.

We are also accredited to the Cyber Essentials Plus standard, a highly regarded information security standard backed by the UK Government and the National Cybersecurity Centre. Accreditation is required for any organisation working in the government sector.

“As ESG issues rise up the agenda for our clients, our employees, and more widely in society, we recognise that this adds a potentially far more complex dimension to the way we govern ourselves and with that in mind, we are currently reviewing our governance structures.”



Claire Larbey, General Counsel – London

Our report

This report could not have been produced without invaluable contributions from colleagues across our UK and international offices. In all the conversations we held and interviews we conducted, their interest in and support for the responsible business agenda we are pursuing shone through. That gives us great confidence to continue reporting on the progress we make in the year ahead.

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