

Responsible Business Report 2023-2024



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Foreword



Alison Regan

Partner and chair of Responsible Business Committee

Last year we achieved a major milestone in Russell-Cooke's almost 150-year history with the development and publication of our first ever Responsible Business Report (RBR).

As a firm, we have always promoted and participated in numerous activities that now sit under the ESG banner. We've tended to just get on with these activities rather than shouting about them. This is part of what makes Russell-Cooke such a great place to work – 'doing the right thing' is part of our DNA and we're dedicated to taking real action on the things that matter most.

Since publishing our first RBR, a responsible business committee has been set up. The committee meets regularly to debate and propose new initiatives and to check on progress against the commitments from our last report. This new level of reporting gives us the opportunity to take a step back and see clearly what we have achieved.

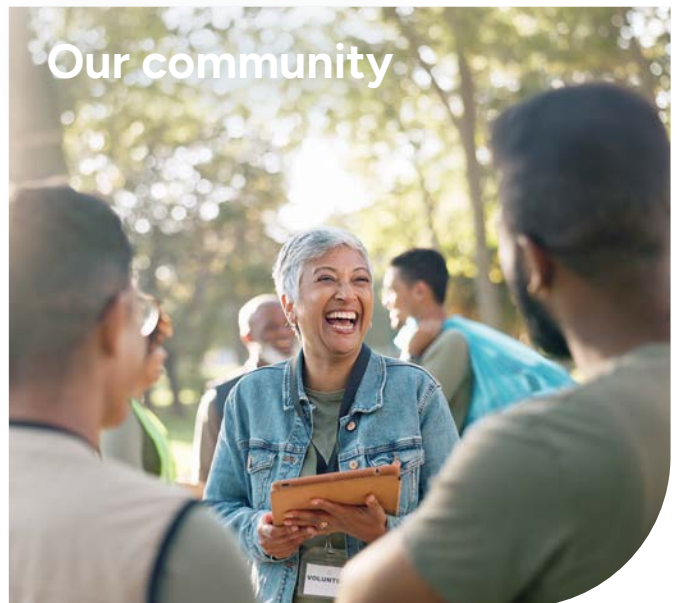
From our new sustainable procurement policy, to our decision to initiate a volunteering day and to the grass roots work of our affinity groups, it feels like we have achieved a great deal in the last 12 months and I am grateful to my colleagues for all their hard work and ideas.

This commitment to responsibility is embedded in our approach to our work and we know how important it is to our people. But we have gone one step further and woven it explicitly into our three year strategic plan and the fabric of our governance structures. Every decision that goes to our board is assessed against our commitments – and particularly the centrality of climate change and social inclusion as critical issues for our business, people, industry and communities.

We still of course have much to do. As the firm continues to grow and thrive it is more important than ever that we keep ourselves accountable as a responsible business. As we head into 2024 I look forward to actioning the plans currently in the pipeline and to reporting on them into the future.

Introduction

This report is divided into four sections, each of which represents a key aspect of our approach to being a responsible business:



Within each section we give an account of what we have achieved to date and the specific things we aim to do. We call these our commitments, a full summary of which can be found [here](#).

Our environment

Carbon footprint

Environmental sustainability remains key to our strategic vision, and our 2022-2025 strategic plan underscores our dedication to integrating climate change considerations into our decision-making processes. Indeed, our three-year strategic plan commits our firm (and in particular its leadership) to ensuring that climate change is a central factor in all decision making affecting our business.

In alignment with this commitment, we have this year pledged to join the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi).

Participation in SBTi necessitates a firm commitment to decreasing our scope 1 emissions by 50% by the year 2030. This strategic initiative provides us with a clearly defined and measurable pathway to reduce our emissions, aligning with the objectives set forth in the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Commencing with our data for the 2023-24 financial year, we have committed to providing annual progress reports to SBTi, ensuring transparency and accountability in our efforts.

With confidence in our commitment and strategic measures, and by engaging an engineering consultant to assist us, we believe we can successfully achieve the ambitious goal of a 50% reduction in scope 1 emissions by the year 2030.

In addition to actively reducing our own emissions, since 2019, we have partnered with Carbon Footprint Ltd to offset more than our entire carbon usage, on that basis at least achieving more than carbon neutrality. To date we have offset in the region of 3,000 tonnes of CO₂ through supporting projects certified as reducing future atmospheric carbon.

We acknowledge that offsetting is just one facet of the solution, which is why we have made the decision to prioritise direct emissions reductions through our SBTi commitment.

Accurately measuring our baseline carbon emissions is key to setting meaningful targets for reduction.

We use two methodologies for calculating the firm’s carbon impact:

The first is the UK’s Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting regulations (SECR) covering a range of environmental matters including greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The second methodology we use is that developed by the Swiss NGO “Foundation myclimate” myclimate.org.

This calculation differs from SECR by taking account of embedded carbon in purchased materials (including, for example, IT equipment and furniture), along with CO2 attributable to business flights and waste disposal. It also gives credit for the use of green electricity tariffs.

In our view, it provides a better measure than the SECR calculation.

The myclimate figure equates to 7.9 tonnes of carbon for each £1,000,000 of revenue and 1.1 tonnes per person working in the firm.

The carbon offsetting projects we have supported

The projects are selected each year by our staff and in most cases deliver not only an environmental benefit but also a development gain.

For the year 2022-2023 the staff voted to offset against the following projects:

- MW wind power project in Maharashtra, India (representing 40% of emissions offset).
- Energising India solar power project (representing 20% of emissions offset).
- VEER small hydro power project in Maharashtra India (representing 40% of emissions offset).

Looking ahead, we will explore potential opportunities to support offsetting projects in the UK. We do everything possible to ensure that our offsetting is genuine and effective.

SECR GHG emissions	tCO2			
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Gas (Scope 1)	213	244	198	183
Fuel (Scope 1)	48	38	41	32
Electricity (Scope 2)	177	164	121	149
Travel (Scope 3)	2	1	1	1
Total	440	447	361	365

Foundation myclimate carbon footprint - tCO2	tCO2		
	2021	2022	2023
Energy	244	198	183
Transport	39	42	32
Subsistence	0	0	0
Materials	205	141	153
Waste	2	2	2
Total	440	383	370



Energy, recycling and supply chain

Energy – pioneering sustainability

We have generated our own solar energy on site since 2013. Our solar panels currently generate an impressive 26,000kWh of electricity per annum which is pushed into the National Grid. Over their minimum 20-year lifespan, these panels are anticipated to yield savings exceeding 388 tonnes of CO₂.

This year, we initiated a comprehensive review and replacement programme for our solar panels, aiming to enhance their efficiency and overall output.

All electricity across our offices is supplied on renewable or carbon neutral tariffs, while we deploy smart technology to proactively monitor and reduce electricity use.

In celebration of Earth Day 2023 in April, we welcomed CREW Energy to our offices to deliver a presentation to our staff on effective strategies to decrease energy consumption at home. CREW Energy, a not-for-profit organisation, specialises in providing energy advice and consultations to support businesses and residents in south-west London in reducing their carbon footprint. We were grateful for the opportunity to gain insights from their expertise.

Recycling

In line with our ongoing commitment to reducing waste through re-use, recycling and donations, in 2023, we conducted an audit of our single-use plastic usage.

Although we found our consumption to be within reasonable limits and generate only a minimal amount of plastic waste, we have a project team in place to actively explore ways to eliminate it entirely. Phase 1 of this project is a full audit of usage within the business, which will be reported to the board within the 2023-24 financial year and used to inform subsequent strategic decision making.

Sustainable travel

On Earth Day 2023 we encouraged everyone in the firm to consider using a more sustainable form of travel for their journey to work. We also ran a survey for staff to ask them whether they would consider cycling to work if they were put in touch with an experienced cyclist who would be able to offer help and possibly even cycle with them. A significant number replied that they would welcome this support and as a result we will be setting up a 'buddies' scheme to match experienced cyclists with those who are nervous but keen to use more sustainable means of transport.

Using sustainable suppliers

In line with the commitments we made in 2022-23, this year we have developed and delivered a comprehensive firm-wide sustainable procurement policy.

This policy focuses on enhancing the sustainability of our supply chain. In addition to environmental criteria for suppliers, our policy also assesses other factors, including whether they uphold fair labour practices such as being living wage employers.

Phase 1 of this project is to communicate the policy to key decision-makers across the firm by end March 2024 before moving to Phase 2 in which we will audit the procurement decisions that have been made to ensure compliance with the responsible procurement policy by end 2024.

Working more sustainably

We have signed up as a firm to the Greener Litigation Pledge to minimise the environmental impact of our dispute resolution practice including by using electronic rather than paper communication and documents where possible and avoiding unnecessary travel.

Biodiversity

We are major long term sponsors and supporters of the Friends of Richmond Park which is a National Nature Reserve as well as a site of special scientific interest.

As a response to declining pollinator populations we have for some years maintained active hives of Buckfast bees and a garden of pollinator-friendly plants at our Putney offices. The bees continue to thrive and provide an annual honey harvest.

On advice from the Friends of Richmond Park, we have embarked upon a project to install bird boxes on office buildings (where this is permissible). The first stage of the project is planting vegetation to create a bird-friendly zone behind our Putney office (by end March 2024) with a view to attracting more birdlife.

Our commitments

Many of our commitments are long term in nature, and include the following objectives which will be prioritised in 2024:

- Reduce our Scope 1 emissions. We will join the SBTi and reduce our Scope 1 emissions by 50% by 2030, and transparently report on our progress.
- Remain better than carbon neutral, through carbon offsetting where carbon emissions cannot be reduced or eliminated. We will explore more local and transparent methods of offsetting with a view to replacing existing investment into offshore projects with investment into local / domestic community projects.
- Aim to replace gas boilers if at all possible by 2030. Replacing serviceable boilers sooner would overall have a more harmful impact on environment than living with Scope 1 emissions
- Install vehicle charging facilities for clients and staff at our new Kingston office to add to those already installed in Putney.



- Maintain carbon neutral or renewable tariffs for electricity.
- Implement and roll out the newly-developed sustainable procurement policy, to measure potential suppliers against their environmental impact and commitments, firmwide. We will introduce a supplier checklist.
- Cease purchasing unnecessary branded merchandise and ensure that merchandise that is purchased complies with our new sustainable procurement policy.
- Work towards achieving zero plastic waste by completing a firmwide audit by end June 2024.

When discussing environmental issues it is so hard to avoid platitudes – or the ‘blah blah blah’ as Greta Thunberg so eloquently puts it. But I passionately believe that it is critical for us all, as a business and as individuals, to engage with the crisis of climate change by making positive changes to reduce carbon emissions and contributing, in our small way, to ensuring we meet the targets set out in the Paris agreement. If great change comes about as the sum of multiple tiny adjustments, then encouraging our people to cycle to work occasionally or to eliminate their use of single-use plastics is as mission-critical as organisational change.

We need to be vigilant to ensure that any actions we take are effective, meaningful and sustainable. On that front, over the next year I will be looking at how we can reduce our reliance on carbon offsetting and focus in the future on decreasing carbon more directly instead.”

Pippa Garland, partner, charity and social business team





Our pursuit of justice

Our beliefs and commitments

Our 2022-2025 strategy makes clear the centrality of access to justice in our business:



We will continue as lawyers to stand for the rule of law and access to justice and will live our values of integrity and independence. We will continue our commitment to undertake legally aided work focussing our resources on those areas where we have the highest level of expertise.”

Our commitment to access to justice means that we supply some of our services at less than cost or without charge. This is enabled by our ongoing and explicit pledge to ensure that a proportion of our annual turnover should consist of publicly funded work.

In the financial year 2022/2023 a total of 12,922 hours of legal aid work was recorded by 75 fee-earners from across the firm.

We continue to support legal aid work in areas of law where access to justice is vital to those seeking it and where fewer and fewer firms are able to afford to provide legal aid advice.

This includes the areas of public children law, specific clinical negligence/personal injury matters involving children, inquests and social housing (homelessness). Of the Russell-Cooke lawyers committing to this work, many are leaders in their field with national reputations.

We will maintain our commitment to legally aided work in accordance with our strategy and in 2024 our expectation is that it will account for 5% of our client work.

Justice in the spotlight: representing families of the bereaved in the Shoreham air disaster

Dominic Fairclough, partner, personal injury and clinical negligence team

Partner Dominic Fairclough represented two of the bereaved families following the horrific air crash at the Shoreham air show on 22 August 2015. Eleven men



lost their lives when a plane in the show lost control and landed on a main road, the A27. The pilot survived.

Civil claims were settled prior to a criminal prosecution of the pilot at the Old Bailey when after approximately eight weeks the jury found the pilot not guilty of gross negligence manslaughter.

Dominic then continued to act predominately on a pro bono basis (with a very small contribution from legal aid) in respect of the inquest which only concluded more than seven years after the accident after a three-week hearing. It ended on 20 December 2022 with the conclusion that the men had been unlawfully killed.

The Coroner concluded that the crash occurred because the aircraft's speed on entry into a particular manoeuvre was too slow and the aircraft did not achieve sufficient height at the apex of the manoeuvre to complete it before impacting the ground. Further the pilot did not perform an escape manoeuvre. In her concluding remarks the Coroner stated that "Eleven innocent lives were cruelly lost on 22 August 2015. Lives that were cut too short. This huge loss will be borne by their families for the rest of their lives, a loss also that is felt by the community of West Sussex."

As a result of the crash a lengthy series of safety recommendations was made by the Air Accidents Investigation

Branch (AAIB) which were taken on board by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to ensure the continued safety of air shows within the UK.

Justice in the spotlight: seeking justice for a bereaved family following a catalogue of care failures

Janice Gardner, partner, personal injury and clinical negligence team

*Trigger warning. Please be aware that this narrative description contains factual information which some readers may find upsetting.

Partner Janice Gardner represented the family of a wife and mother aged 39 (Mrs X) at a jury inquest in April 2023. Mrs X tragically took her life in May 2021 whilst she was an inpatient on a secure psychiatric ward. She was only an inpatient at this hospital between 23 April 2021 and 20 May 2021 before she sadly died.

At the inquest, the Coroner found that there were a number of failings in the care afforded to Mrs X whilst an inpatient. Significantly, the Coroner found that there was a catalogue of failures on the night she died which in turn enabled her to use the cord of a vacuum as a ligature. The Trust made a number of admissions, of note:

- Mrs X should not have been allowed into the laundry room unattended
- there was a failure to carry out adequate supervision when she was in the laundry room in the light of her high risk of suicide by ligature and self-harm
- they failed to provide a safe environment and/or to supervise her when using the laundry room.

In the Record of Inquest, the Coroner found that:

"There was a gross failure to adequately supervise [the deceased] in the laundry room and provide a safe environment. The lack of supervision gave [the deceased] the opportunity to carry out her suicide plan because she had time and opportunity to tamper with the door, which was meant to automatically lock."

Janice was able to secure legal aid funding for Mrs X's bereaved family. She is now investigating a clinical negligence claim on behalf of Mrs X's estate. Prior to the inquest commencing, the Trust admitted liability in the civil claim.

Justice in the spotlight: at risk children provided with the care they deserve

Our children law team represented the maternal aunt of two vulnerable children at risk of forced marriage and domestic abuse from Pakistan. This case was legal aid funded.

Our client had flown to the UK so she could care for the children and their mother in a crisis.

The team advocated for their client and pressed the court to join her as a party, given that she had been a consistent and loving primary caregiver to the children up until their mother's death.

The children's mother sadly passed away from a terminal illness shortly after court proceedings were initiated and this client had been providing palliative care to the mother and looking after the children full-time throughout this difficult period.

The children's father had been arrested and made subject to bail conditions after making death threats to the mother; the bail conditions meant that the father was prevented from contacting the children or from attending the family home.

Following the mother's death, the children were the only witnesses to the domestic abuse between the father and the mother and to the harm that they themselves were alleged to have suffered.

The aunt was successfully joined to the case and able to give evidence in support of the allegations made.

The case was also complicated by the client's limited immigration status and expert immigration evidence was required to inform the proceedings. These complex proceedings concluded with a special guardianship order being made in favour of our client and she continues to care for the children with support provided by the local authority.



Access to justice remains at the heart of our mission at Russell-Cooke. It's a conviction I hold personally and one that is shared, and acted on, by many across the firm. In today's challenging climate, where funding is scarce for people and support services, our commitment to representing those without financial means is more crucial than ever.

My long-term vision is to expand access to justice, especially for those facing dire circumstances, ensuring that more individuals in our society are seen, heard and given legal representation."

Sarah Richardson, partner, children and education law team

Justice in the spotlight: rehousing a vulnerable family in extreme need

In 2021, the housing and property litigation team were contacted by a client requesting assistance in relation to her housing situation.

Our client had previously made a homelessness application to the Local Authority, and in 2010 had been placed with her four children in a cramped maisonette.

At the time of our instruction, the children ranged between 11 and 15 years old. Three of the children shared one bedroom. Two of the children were disabled, and all of the children were struggling with their education.

Our client's eldest daughter suffered from severe mental health issues, and was at the time detained in hospital due to several suicide attempts. The daughter could not be released from

hospital, due to the family's unsuitable housing, which did not provide space for home treatment.

Our client's son had ADHD, and his aggressive behaviours were exacerbated by the cramped conditions in the family home. The family were involved with Social Services, as the police had been called to the property on several occasions, due to the children's escalating conflicts.

We obtained expert reports which confirmed the detrimental effect of the family's housing situation on the children's disabilities, behaviour and education.

As a result of our involvement, and fully funded by legal aid, in 2023 our client and her children were rehoused by the Local Authority in a five bedroomed property with a garden, close to the children's schools and medical care providers.

Justice in the spotlight: representing victims of the Grenfell Tower fire

We were one of a few firms to be asked to advise the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire on an emergency rota in the days and weeks following the disaster.

We have been involved in the community for over six years, representing survivors and families of the bereaved in the ongoing Inquiry, assisting them to secure accommodation after the fire and progress civil claims concerning injuries sustained in the fire.

Our work on the inquiry and housing issues is remunerated by the Government at rates that are lower than the firm's commercial rates.

The Inquiry hearings concluded at the end of 2022. We await the publication of the Inquiry's final report, which is due in 2024.

We remain committed to supporting the survivors and bereaved families of this tragedy.



Our people

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We strive to make our offices positive places to work, where people are happy and successful and empowered to be their best selves both in and out of work.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) group consists of representatives from across the firm and creates a forum for discussion on being effective allies and helping to champion inclusivity both within the firm and externally.

Alongside this, we have developed and launched a range of initiatives in line with our vision for a diverse, inclusive and positive workplace.

- In 2023 we ran a detailed data gathering exercise and compared our ED&I characteristics and performance

to other London firms. The findings of this exercise are below. Our annually produced diversity statistics are available here. We are currently analysing what we have learnt from this exercise with a view to exploring specific initiatives relating to our key focus on social mobility.

- It is now two years since we introduced Rare Recruitment's Contextual Recruitment System which provides further assistance and context in terms of assessing applications and improving the social mobility profile of our graduate recruits. We have seen an increase from 2022 to 2023 of undergraduates applying from UK state schools together with an increase in applications from those who will be the first generation in their families to attend university. Consequently, the number of offers and acceptances within this demographic significantly increased year on year: 82% of our 2025 trainee cohort will be from UK state schools up from 56% in the 2024 cohort.

- We continue to be Stonewall Diversity Champions. We aim through this partnership to ensure that all LGBTQ+ partners and staff feel comfortable and can thrive in the workplace. We achieve this by ensuring policies and processes do not inadvertently exclude LGBTQ+ people. We are also active members of the Legal Best network, an LGBTQ+ network for law firms.
- We will be rolling out mandatory anti-bullying and harassment training for all members of staff in 2024.
- In the summers of 2022 and 2023 we took part in the 10,000 Black Interns programme and have committed to participating in the programme again in 2024. We hosted two interns each year for a six week programme with both interns rotating around three legal teams. The feedback received from the interns and the host departments has been extremely positive.

- This year we set up a 'Parents in Law' group – this is an NCT-style group enabling Russell-Cooke parents on maternity, paternity or parental leave to communicate and meet up for mutual support and networking opportunities.
- In 2023 we reduced the required eligibility period for maternity and paternity pay across the firm to support more people at the firm notwithstanding their length of service.
- **Ethnicity:** The representation of non-white ethnic groups at Russell-Cooke is currently slightly below the SRA London firm average. This is not where we would like to be as a firm and over the next three years we are aiming at least to meet the SRA average for similar-sized London law firms.
- **Sexuality:** We are above the SRA London firm average for LGBTQ+ staff and are committed to maintaining this.

Diversity at Russell-Cooke

Below we present the findings of our comprehensive ED&I data gathering and benchmarking exercise undertaken in 2023. In this report, we have compared Russell-Cooke's data to that of London firms overall, using the SRA's Law Firm Diversity Data Tool (available here).

- **Gender:** We exceed the SRA London-wide average for law firms of female staff compared to men and at every level of seniority for lawyers below partner level there are more women than men. We exceed the London average at partner and board level. We intend to maintain this ratio at the most senior levels if not continue to exceed it. The percentage of female partners increased in the reporting period from 35% at end June 2022, to 41% at end June 2023.

Wellbeing

We firmly believe that the professional and personal wellbeing of our staff is fundamental to all that we seek to achieve in our firm.

The principle of wellbeing is embedded in our strategic plan:

"To provide an experience at work that makes us the firm of choice for all of those of high ability who share our vision and to support this with a ready acceptance of our collective responsibility for the wellbeing of everyone within the firm".

The firm has continued to demonstrate its commitment to promoting positive wellbeing amongst our staff and

this was again praised by the quality assurance organisation Lexcel in our 2023 assessment:

"The Practice has also continued to place significant emphasis on Mental Health and Wellbeing programmes and the support necessary for them to be effective."

The firm was shortlisted for the second consecutive year for Best Law Firm for Work/Life Balance at the Legal Cheek Awards and featured in the top 10 law firms for Work/Life Balance in the 2023 Legal 500 Future Lawyers Survey.

We have continued to strive to ensure that wellbeing underpins all that we do and this is again reflected in the results of our annual staff survey.

Since our last survey, staff were less likely to say they worked longer hours than they would like to, and more likely to know to whom they could turn for support if they needed it.

In the words of one of our trainees:



Work/life balance isn't a marketing line, it is taken very seriously."

Chambers Student Guide 2024

We run a number of initiatives across the firm to support and promote positive wellbeing and mental health. Our Wellbeing Champions throughout the firm meet to exchange ideas and organise a range of events aimed at promoting and supporting the wellbeing of everyone who works here, from desk-yoga and mindfulness sessions to getting out into nature to enjoy the azaleas and rhododendrons of Richmond Park during our spring guided walk in the Isabella Plantation.

This was further enhanced in 2023:

- Following its launch in 2022, we grew our support network for menopausal and peri-menopausal women, raising awareness amongst all staff of the impact, both physical and mental, that menopause can have and providing support and understanding for those impacted.



- Our women's networking group supports, inspires and uplifts women across the firm and runs a vibrant range of events from lunches to debates and even self-defence classes.
- We held webinars and provided resources focusing on men's health, including during Movember and Men's Mental Health Week.
- We provided loss and bereavement training to help colleagues understand the impact of bereavement and provide simple ways to support those experiencing it.
- We have increased the number of trained Mental Health First Aiders across the firm, who advocate for positive mental health and provide essential support and understanding to colleagues where needed.

- The range of clubs offered within the firm by our staff for the benefit of likeminded colleagues has also continued to expand and now includes a lunchtime ramblers club and a tennis club, both established in 2023, as well as a diverse range of other activities ranging from book, film and board games clubs to running, cricket, football and netball.



Our commitments



Championing equality, diversity and inclusion is not just a policy for us, it is a principle that sits at the core of our identity. We're committed to fostering a workplace where every individual is valued for who they are – the diversity of our practice reflects the genuine diversity of our people.

Change does not happen overnight and the legal sector is notoriously slow to change. However since the publication of our last report we have seen encouraging progress in social mobility with an increasing proportion of state-educated graduates choosing to start their legal careers with us.

My aspiration is for Russell-Cooke to be the employer brand of choice for any candidate (whether legally qualified or otherwise) seeking a career in the legal sector who comes from a diverse background, or for whom a commitment to ED&I is an important consideration."

Gareth Ledsham, partner, trusts and estate disputes team





Our community

Charitable initiatives, fundraising and sponsorships

Our investment and participation in our wider communities is fundamental to our responsible business strategy.

To enable our people to play their part we have recently launched a pilot volunteering scheme for staff to take time off to volunteer for causes promoting access to justice, social mobility, the environment or equality and diversity in particular. The one year pilot will be with our junior lawyer cohort (0-3 years qualified) and if it is successful we hope to roll out the scheme firmwide.

As a firm with a large presence in London, we are fortunate to have a number of communities with whom we have a connection and can support.

- This year, we held a charity golf day which raised funds for the **Weir Archer Academy**. This charity was founded by Olympian David Weir and provides athletes, including disabled athletes, coaching support and expertise.
- **The Trussell Trust**. Our Christmas card donation for the past four years has been donated to the charity, while a number of members of the firm

also participated in the Race Against Hunger once again in 2023 to raise money for it.

- In March 2023, the Women's Networking Group held its second clothes drive to donate clothing and accessories to the charity Smart Works, to equip women with the essentials to confidently attend job interviews and start new jobs. Six boxes of clothes and accessories were donated.
- **London Legal Support Trust**: We support the LLST via participating in their organised activities such as the London Legal Walk and the Guildford Legal Walk. These are co-ordinated and promoted internally by the trainee CSR committee. LLST supports legal advice centres across the UK providing access to justice for those who can't afford to pay for it and aren't eligible for legal aid.
- Our charity team held a singalong Christmas 'jingle and mingle' for staff to raise funds for **Crisis**.

In addition, we sponsor organisations such as theatres, sports teams, events and individuals which operate in the areas of our offices including:

- **Polka Theatre Access sponsorship:** we continue to support the Polka Theatre access programme. The education law team is particularly engaged in this sponsorship as our support goes to help children with access needs who would otherwise struggle with mainstream performances.
- **Friends of Richmond Park:** we continue to support this national nature reserve and charity with our sponsorship closely aligned with both our environmental and wellbeing commitments.
- **Rose Theatre:** we have been sponsoring this theatre since its foundation and construction almost 20 years ago. In addition to its artistic productions, the Rose undertakes a high-quality learning and participation programme, educating people of all ages and backgrounds in various aspects of dramatic art, nurturing emerging talent, and serving as a cultural hub for communities in Kingston and beyond.
- **Getting on Board.** Russell-Cooke's charity and social business team has entered into a sponsorship agreement with Getting On Board, a trustee recruitment and diversity charity aiming to widen access to trusteeships with a focus on supporting underrepresented people to become charity trustees.

Our commitments



We will complete a pilot staff volunteering scheme with a view to extending the scheme firmwide if it is successful.

From fundraising for Crisis at Christmas to baking for Macmillan, our people care and make a difference – and the firm supports them. Our new staff volunteering scheme provides another opportunity to give back to the community and I look forward to seeing how people use their time and skills for good.”

Chris Rowse, partner, charity and social business team



Our 2023 Commitments – how did we do?

In our Responsible Business Report 2022 we set out our commitments for 2023. We have met the following commitments since then:

Our environment: we have

- remained carbon neutral
- measured and reduced our carbon emissions in alignment with the Paris Agreement
- maintained carbon neutral or renewable tariffs for electricity
- reviewed and replaced where required existing solar panels
- developed and launched a procurement policy

Our pursuit of justice: we have

- maintained our commitments to legally aided work equating to 5% of our client work revenue in 2023

Our people: we have

- increased female partners over the year
- maintained a policy on the use of gender-neutral language in all communications
- provided disability awareness training for visible and non-visible disabilities and encouraged the disclosure of conditions to enable us to offer appropriate support
- implemented biennial mandatory unconscious bias training
- encouraged improved data capture to assess social mobility performance
- continued to promote positive wellbeing amongst our staff through ongoing initiatives, projects and support services

Our communities: we are

- in the process of establishing a firm charity and community group to oversee and create our initiatives in this area and develop a more strategic approach

Summary of our 2024 commitments

Our environment

- remain carbon neutral
- measure and reduce our carbon emissions in alignment with the Paris Agreement, including Scope 1, and join the SBTi
- replace gas boilers by 2030
- maintain carbon neutral or renewable tariffs for electricity
- implement and roll out the newly-developed sustainable procurement policy
- ensure any branded merchandise purchased is in accordance with our responsible procurement policy
- work towards achieving zero plastic waste by completing a firmwide audit by end June 2024

Our pursuit of justice

- maintain our commitment to legally aided work equating to 5% of our client work revenue in 2024

Our people

- further increase proportion of female partners by 2025
- meet the SRA London law firm average for workplace ethnic diversity by 2027
- explore ways to provide work experience opportunities to those who may have mental health or learning difficulties
- encourage improved data capture to assess social mobility performance and explore further measures to improve social mobility within the firm
- we will review the use of standardised structured interview questions with a view to potentially rolling these out across the firm to remove unconscious bias as far as possible
- continue to promote positive wellbeing amongst our staff through ongoing initiatives, projects and support services

Our communities

- complete a pilot volunteering scheme with a view to extending the scheme firmwide if it is successful

russell-cooke.co.uk



Best Lawyers Award 2025
Wealth for Good Award 2024
STEP Philanthropy Team of
the Year 2023