

Responsible Business Report 2022



Contents

- 03 Foreword
- 04 Introduction
- 05 Our environment
- 08 Our pursuit of justice
- 11 Our people
- 13 Our community
- 15 Summary of our commitments
- 16 Conclusion: justice and responsibility

Foreword



Alison Regan
Joint Managing Partner

It is clear to me that we live in uncertain and challenging times. The world seems to be a much more volatile place than it was even a few years ago.

However, that feeling of 'permacrisis' (Collins Dictionary's depressing word of the year for 2022) is probably due to an increased awareness of fundamentally important issues and risks which perhaps have been hiding in plain sight for too long.

These range from the threat of unchecked climate change, brought home by the recent COP27 deliberations, through to the burning need to continue to improve access, equity and inclusion across society, including the workplace.

Acknowledging these challenges and raising awareness and understanding is critical and individual businesses, including Russell-Cooke, have a responsibility to play a part in this journey.

This, our first ever Responsible Business Report, is an important milestone in this regard. We seek to shine the spotlight on that which has perhaps been hiding in plain sight for us: both our achievements, and areas where we must make progress.

The purpose of this report, then, is twofold.

Firstly, to take stock of, and celebrate, what we have already achieved. Our firm is built on strong values of integrity and social responsibility. As lawyers we stand for the rule of law and access to justice, and we live that culture every day in what we do and how we treat one another and our clients.

But we must also go further.

And so the second, and even more important, purpose of this report is to transparently set out where we are today and where we are aiming to get to across a range of critical areas, including the environment and climate change as well as our business's impact on our people and broader communities.

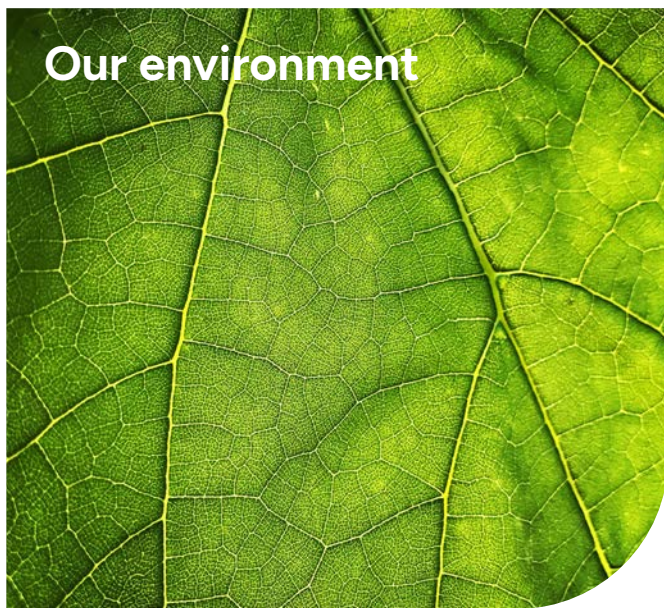
Through transparency we will hold ourselves to account, ensure that these issues are central to our business decision making, and challenge ourselves to do even more.

Our approach is intended to reflect the fact that we are both an ethical and a resilient business. We recognise that we won't always meet every objective in full but that is not a reason for not accepting the challenge.

I welcome this report and its aims, and thank my colleagues across the firm for their continued support for this important initiative.

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

A key part of our 2019-2022 strategic plan was to “continue to improve the environmental sustainability of the firm and take significant steps towards carbon neutrality.”

Since 2019, therefore, we have partnered with Carbon Footprint Ltd to offset our entire carbon usage to become at least carbon neutral. To date we have offset 2,100 tonnes of CO₂ through supporting projects certified as reducing future atmospheric carbon.

In November 2021 we were named by Legal Business Magazine as one of only three law firms to reach the best level for environmental impact in respect of carbon emissions. But we recognise that offsetting is just a small part of the solution and so we also commit to fundamentally reducing our direct emissions.

Accurately measuring our baseline carbon emissions is key to setting 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 SECR introduced new annual reporting requirements for large unquoted companies, like Russell-Cooke.

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

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

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

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 9.8 tonnes of carbon for each £1,000,000 of revenue and 0.076 tonnes per square metre of office space and 1.2 tonnes per person working in the firm.

The carbon offsetting projects we have supported

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

For the year 2021-2022:

- 50% of the emissions were offset through a UK Tree and Protecting the Amazon project.
- 30% were offset via the Breathing Space cooking stoves project in India.
- 12% were offset through the Gunung Salak geothermal energy project in Indonesia.
- 8% were offset via the R. One wind power project in Thailand.

For the year 2022-2023 the staff voted for the following projects:

- MW wind power project in Maharashtra, India
- Energising India solar power project
- VEER small hydro power project in Maharashtra India



Energy, recycling and supply chain

Energy

We were an early adopter of office based solar generation in 2013. This is still unusual. Our solar panels generate 26,000kWh of electricity per annum which is pushed into the national grid. Over their minimum 20 year lifespan they should save over 388 tonnes of CO2.

All electricity across our offices is supplied on renewable or carbon neutral tariffs.

Meanwhile, across our three offices we have introduced smart technology which operates shutdowns to reduce electricity use, from computers to lighting systems.

Investment in new lighting technology in recent years has taken advantage of developing technology to significantly reduce our electricity use.

Recycling

We reduce our waste through re-using, donating and/or recycling the majority of our waste.

This includes IT equipment, food waste and paper. Our approach has been to use commercial separation rather than require staff to spend time operating multiple segregated bins.

We securely recycle non-work IT equipment for all members of the firm. This means that devices can be recycled without any concern that data will remain accessible. Allowing devices to be reused where possible avoids the environmental and humanitarian concerns connected to the production of many components required in such equipment (including lithium, copper and silicon). Where it cannot be reused, proper recycling allows potentially hazardous materials such as battery acid to be responsibly handled.

Prior to adopting a paper free approach with the onset of the Pandemic, we adopted policies to reduce our paper use saving six million sheets of paper in the two years prior to 2021.

Using sustainable suppliers

Although we have been able to ensure that some of our suppliers operate sustainably, this is an area of opportunity for the future. The firm is in the process of drafting a procurement policy to source sustainable products where proportionate and possible.

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 offices. In the summer of 2022 we were proud to win first prize for our honey in the prestigious New Forest and Hampshire county show.

To mark Earth Day 2022, our Environmental Group and volunteers built "bug hotels" at each of our offices, to benefit different types of mini-beast and insects, such as ladybirds, bees, spiders and woodlice.

Our commitments

We have set ourselves the following objectives for 2023 and beyond:

- **Remain carbon neutral**, through carbon offsetting where carbon emissions cannot be reduced or eliminated.
- **Gas boilers will be replaced by 2030** to reduce our Scope 1 emissions. Replacing serviceable boilers sooner would overall have a more harmful impact on environment than living with Scope 1 emissions.
- **Our cars and van are being progressively replaced with electric vehicles.** Further, we will install vehicle charging facilities for clients and staff at our new Kingston office to add to those already installed in Putney.

- **Carbon neutral or renewable tariffs for electricity** will continue to be maintained.
- **Our existing solar panels** will be reviewed and potentially replaced where appropriate.
- **A procurement policy and supplier checklist** will be developed and introduced, to measure potential suppliers against their environmental impact and commitments. We will also cease the purchase of any branded merchandise which has a significant environmental impact.



Tackling the climate crisis will be the defining issue of our time. It will need the collective effort, not just of politicians and governments, but also of businesses and individuals.

As a charity and philanthropy lawyer, the environmental crisis has always been important to my clients, many of whom are on the frontline helping those directly affected by it. However, being environmentally friendly is no longer a "nice to have". It is an absolute priority for our firm, our people, clients and the communities we operate in, and will be key to the firm's continued resilience and success, as reflected by our strategic plan.

We have set, and aim to achieve, ambitious targets for the firm, backed and supported by evidence. Through being transparent, ambitious and continuing to learn and improve I hope we will be able to play our part in creating positive impact for our planet."

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.

For many years we have had a series of explicit strategic goals to annually set that a proportion of our turnover should consist of publicly funded work.

It is now, unfortunately, very rare for a firm of our size and type to undertake legally aided work at all.

In the main, legally aided work is delivered by skilled and dedicated firms specialising in legal aid work and operating within the severe constraints of the legal aid scheme. By comparison to their collective contribution, ours is modest.

We believe that to do so is the right and responsible thing according to our values, and ensures cases of the utmost importance are handled to the highest standard by highly experienced and specialist lawyers, properly supported.

In the financial year 2021/2022 71 fee-earners from across the firm contributed 12,721 hours of legal aid work in total.

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, criminal law, specific clinical negligence/personal injury matters involving children, inquests and social housing (homelessness). Of the 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 2023 our expectation is that it will account for 5% of our client work.

Spotlight on our work: Grenfell Tower

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 now been involved in the community for over five years and remain heavily involved, 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.

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

Spotlight on our work: a tragedy contributed to by neglect

Sarah Tower, partner, clinical negligence and personal injury team

Partner Sarah Towler represented the family of 14-year-old RS at the inquest into her death in June 2022. RS tragically took her life in May 2021 following a struggle with her mental health. Her death came a month after her discharge from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), run by the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

At the inquest, the Senior Coroner found that the mental health services had failed RS, and that her death was contributed to by neglect. There were findings of a number of gross failures made by the Trust.



The Trust disclosed that since RS's death they had made extensive changes to the way in which their child and adolescent mental health services were delivered and the Coroner directed the Trust to write to her about those. She concluded that the risk to children and young people with mental health difficulties was also a national issue, and indicated that she would send a Prevention of Future Deaths Report to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.



Ensuring access to justice for all that need it has always been at the core of why I am a lawyer. I am very lucky to work in a team of lawyers who share this value and in a firm that has this important commitment as part of its strategic plan. It is with pride we are able to lead the way in ensuring access to justice for our clients, knowing that all our colleagues are supporting us."

Sarah Richardson, partner, children and education law team



Our people

Inclusion

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

Part of that means ensuring our people come from all walks of life, which not only makes good business sense but also makes for an interesting and inclusive workplace and group of colleagues.

We recognise that diversity takes many different forms. Each individual in our team has their own contribution to make to the success of our business.

We also appreciate that only by being able to bring their whole, authentic selves to work can individuals perform at their best to make that contribution.

This year we were named one of the top 10 firms for ranked female lawyers by Chambers & Partners.

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”.

Our approach to wellbeing was praised by the quality assurance organisation Lexcel in our 2022 assessment:



The practice should continue to be highly commended for the significant emphasis, and resources, which it devotes to ensuring the wellbeing and mental health of its employees.”

The firm was shortlisted for Best Law Firm for Work/Life Balance at the Legal Cheek Awards



Our initiatives

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. This includes:

- In November 2021 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 long been signatories to the Law Society Diversity and Inclusion Charter which has now been replaced by the Law Society Diversity and Inclusion Framework, which assists firms to turn words of commitment into positive change and action. For example, by assisting firms to identify long and short terms goals, and identifying the necessary steps to achieve them.
- We are Stonewall Diversity champions through which we aim to ensure that all LGBTQ+ partners and staff feel comfortable to be themselves in the workplace. This is achieved by ensuring policies and processes do not inadvertently exclude LGBTQ+

people. LGBTQ+ Allyship training has been delivered by members of the Stonewall team.

- In the summer of 2022 we took part in the 10,000 Black Interns programme. We hosted two interns, each for a six week programme with both interns rotating around three legal teams. The feedback received from the interns and the host departments was extremely positive. The interns were impressed with the breadth of practice areas and the exposure they were given during their internship. The insight of working in a law firm was invaluable to them and will help to inform their decisions when applying for training contracts. We are committed to supporting the programme going forward.

“

It was an extremely insightful six weeks that truly solidified my interest in becoming a lawyer... I want to thank all the people at Russell-Cooke who I had the privilege of working with and who welcomed me into the firm. The amazing experience would not have been the same without you.”

**Gloria Asiegbu, intern,
summer 2022**

We run a number of initiatives across the firm to support and promote positive wellbeing and mental health, including:

- an employee assistance programme offering access to many support services including confidential counselling
- a working parent and carers network that holds monthly remote coffee meetings for parents and carers to discuss particular issues and for mutual support
- free online or hybrid yoga classes open to all members of the firm and led by one of our partners who is a trained yogi
- a network for menopausal and peri-menopausal women. In June 2022 we launched our first menopause policy, providing recognition of the impact (both physical and mental) that menopause can have and raising awareness amongst all staff, including line managers, of the need for additional support and understanding
- a growing range of clubs for likeminded people ranging from book, film and board games to running, cricket, football and netball

“

I recognise from personal experience the importance of being able to bring one's whole self to work, and want to ensure all our people feel comfortable to do the same. Thinking about how we can be more inclusive should be second nature to us and embedded in everything we do.

**Gareth Ledsham, partner,
trusts and estate disputes team**



Our community

Charitable initiatives, fundraising and sponsorships

Russell-Cooke is committed to making a positive difference, not just for our clients but also for the wider community.

- As a firm with a large physical presence in London and Surrey, we are fortunate to have a number of communities with whom we have a connection. This allows us to support numerous activities by locally based organisations and volunteers who can make a real difference if enabled by even a modest contribution. This may even produce a mutual benefit by reinforcing our own reputation.
- We support staff fundraising initiatives, such as the Macmillan 'World's Biggest Coffee Morning', Jeans for Genes Day and the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.
- We support the Trussell Trust. Our Christmas card donation for the past three years has been donated to the charity as has our client survey fundraising. Many people from across the firm participated in the Race Against Hunger to raise money for them.
- London Legal Support Trust: We support the LLST via participating in their organised activities such as the London walk and the Guildford 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.
- The domestic abuse hub and Green Phone Initiative: Members of the firm's family law team have set up this hub that provides resources for people who are in danger and need to find help. It has an escape button meaning there is no browser history if you have to exit the page quickly.

We sponsor local organisations such as theatres, sports teams, events and individuals (and we will seek to increase our impact by including access requirements as part of our sponsorship) 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 allowing access to the environment via this historic London park; this sponsorship is 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 the 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.
- **Grenfell Athletic Fire Services Tour:** in 2021 we deepened our relationship with the Grenfell Tower community by supporting Grenfell Athletic, a football team founded for victims, families and local residents to provide solace and support, as well as distraction, to victims, families of victims and people in the community. We supported the team's first ever fire tour in July 2021, in which the team played matches against fire service football teams across the country finishing with a match against the Red Watch in London on 6 August 2021. The Red Watch is the fire service that attended Grenfell Tower on the night of the fire, and rescued many survivors of the fire, several of whom now play for Grenfell Athletic. Spurred on by a team of supporters from Russell-Cooke, Grenfell Athletic won the match.
- **Ukraine support:** We provided pro bono immigration advice; supported Ukrainian lawyer Oksana and helped to publicise her story (she is now living in Kingston and we will try to support her legal practice from the UK) and supported refugee Olga by telling her story and commissioning her work as a photographer. In other initiatives our trainee solicitor CSR committee organised a 'wear Ukrainian colours day' in April 2022 and made ribbons to sell. Including matched funds from the firm they collected £2,400 for charity.

Our commitments

To maximise our effort and ensure that our charity and community activities are joined up, we aim to establish a firm charity and community group to oversee and develop our initiatives in this area and develop a more strategic approach to charitable initiatives.

We propose to focus on charities that support our local communities and are aligned with our broader responsible business objectives.



It's vitally important to me, and I know it is to our people more widely, that the firm should make a positive difference in the wider community. We're privileged to do what we do and it's right that we should use our expertise and resources to help others around us."

**Chris Rowse, Partner
Charity and social business team**

Summary of our commitments

Our environment

- remain carbon neutral
- measure and reduce our carbon emissions in alignment with the Paris Agreement
- replace gas boilers by 2030
- replace commercial fleet (1x vehicle) with an electric vehicle by 2024 and electrify car fleet
- maintain carbon neutral or renewable tariffs for electricity
- review and replace where required existing solar panels
- develop and launch a procurement policy and supplier checklist

Our pursuit of justice

- maintain our commitment to legally aided work equating to 5% of our client work revenue in 2023

Our people

- increase female partners over time
- maintain policy on the use of gender-neutral language in all communications
- provide disability awareness training for visible and non-visible disabilities and encourage the disclosure of conditions to enable us to offer appropriate support
- explore ways to provide work experience opportunities to those who may have mental health or learning difficulties
- implement biennial mandatory unconscious bias training
- encourage improved data capture to assess social mobility performance and undertake measures to improve social mobility within the firm
- continue to promote positive wellbeing amongst our staff through ongoing initiatives, projects and support services
- double trained mental health first aiders (from 4 to 8)

Our communities

- establish a firm charity and community group to oversee and develop our initiatives in this area and develop a more strategic approach

Conclusion: justice and responsibility

We are rightly proud and protective of our values and culture, which are the bedrock of our business and which continue to drive our shared success.

They inform all we do and the decisions we make.

They have ensured that we have moved quickly to make big calls on pressing issues, not least our early intervention to become 100% carbon neutral through offsetting. We know of course that this is, in many ways, a stop-gap measure as we pursue reductions of our direct emissions. But it was the right thing to do, even as we acknowledge that there is still more to do.

We have set out our commitments to make clear just what those things are that we need, and want, to do, and to achieve.

It is no surprise that, taken together, initiatives and objectives relating to our people make up the largest portion of our commitments.

We are, of course, a people business. Our team is the heart of our firm.

The professionalism, personal pursuits and passions of our people are what make us unique. This is made plain by some of the case studies of the extraordinary work that our lawyers have delivered for clients – bringing home the role of the law, and lawyers, in transforming human lives through access to justice

That's what this report, and our underlying approach to responsible business, is about. Justice writ large – for our planet and environment, our people, our clients and our wider communities.

That pursuit remains our unbridled commitment, and at the core of our responsible business strategy.



A more thoughtful approach to law

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