



2023/24 REPORT  
RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS





## CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Our Responsible Business Framework	6
Our Ethical Framework	8
EcoVadis and Investors in People	10
UN Sustainable Development Goals	12
Environment	14
Social – Community Engagement	24
Social – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	34
Social – Social Mobility	48
Social – Wellbeing	58
Governance	68
Responsible Business Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	78
Goals and Accountability	80
Responsible Business Accreditations	82

For Neurodiversity Celebration Week we launched our multi-coloured umbrella displays as part of the ADHD Foundation's national project.

# INTRODUCTION

It is with real pride that I present our 2023/24 Responsible Business report to you.

Being a responsible business is at the heart of our commitment to building an ever more sustainable, inclusive and progressive business. It's a recognition of the part we must play in balancing our social, environmental and economic goals for the future of our people, our communities and our planet.

As a firm, we cannot operate as a single silo separate from the communities and environment we live and work in. The stories and information included in this report show not only the firm's way of life, but our strong commitment to building a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

You will see the tireless efforts of our people over the last financial year and what we have accomplished as one firm. From achieving UK Mansfield Certification, to securing a valued position in the Legal 500 Green Guide – everyone has worked hard to make the firm, the industry, and the communities we work in a better place for all.

It's an approach which influences our client work, advising on landmark deals furthering the national energy transition to helping large organisations such as the AA move into new premises where sustainability and environmental impact are at the forefront of the decision-making process – and you can read more about that on page 23.

It's an ethos which is also reflected in how we engage with other businesses and our wider supply chain, continuing to build a vast network of organisations which share similar goals and ambitions. Our team is proud to play a part in that process, engaging and collaborating with contacts to empower them on their net zero journeys with organisations like Planet Mark, which you can read about on page 73.

It's also an unwavering view which is shared by our people, who are at the heart of many of these accomplishments and who we are always looking to further support on the path to being a fully inclusive and cohesive firm.

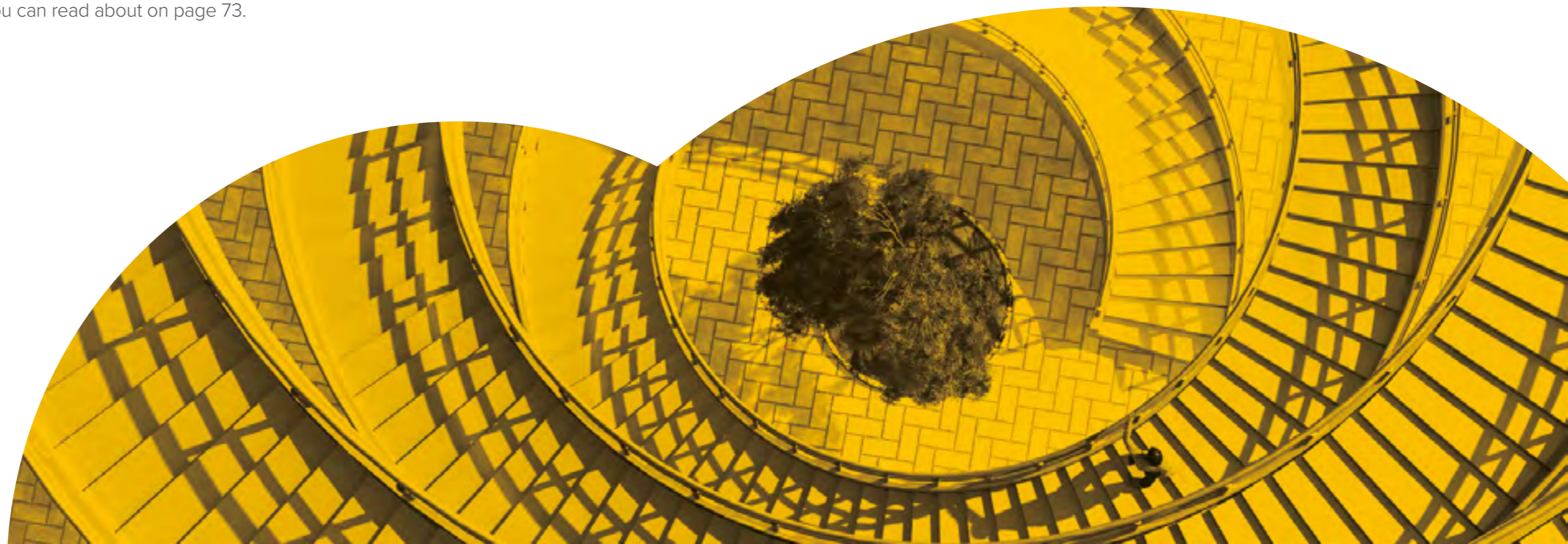
One of my personal highlights of this year is the firm's commitment to further strengthening our internal support networks and becoming the fifth law firm to achieve Disability Confident Leader status – a monumental achievement which you can read about on page 39.

However, this does not mean we will rest on our laurels. This past year has seen fantastic growth across the business in respect of our responsible business aims – but we remain ambitious. We have an ongoing project with the Mindful Business Charter looking at wellbeing and work stressors, we will be developing and launching our new integrated diversity, equity and inclusion strategy, and we're keen to increase our collaborations with clients.

I invite you to dive into this report and get a full picture of how we are working to make proactive progress and deliver meaningful change for our people, our clients, and the communities we work in, and I welcome you to join us in our commitment to making tomorrow even brighter for us all.



**Sally Dallow**  
Partner Lead  
for Responsible Business



# OUR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS STRUCTURE

Our Responsible Business Structure is essential to our governance and ensuring our commitment. The structure outlines our key areas of focus, responsibilities and how our partner and employee networks contribute to this success.

## Responsible Business Framework

**Sally Dallow**, Partner Lead for Responsible Business | **Charlotte von Sicard**, Senior Responsible Business Manager

### Ethical Framework

	E Environment		S Social				G Governance			
Areas of Focus	Environmental Management	Net Zero	Community Engagement	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Social Mobility	Wellbeing	Ethics	Privacy	Sustainable Procurement	Who We Act For
Responsible Business Governance Group	Martin Hall, Head of Facilities Management	Jon Bower, Partner	Sally Dallow, Partner	Paul Britton, Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Sam Lee, Head of Recruitment	Theresa Wilde, HR Director	Louise Norman, General Counsel			
Responsible Business Working Group	Mat Swift, Environment, Health & Safety Manager		Charlotte von Sicard, Senior Responsible Business Manager	Laura Tokell, Senior HR Project Executive	Skye Fenton-Wells, Early Talent Recruitment Manager	Jane Freeman, HR Manager	Louise Norman, General Counsel	Alan Keith, Head of Risk Management	Charmian Leatt and Jenny Hill, Managing Associates General Counsel	Alexander Dickinson, UK Chair and Partner, and Louise Norman, General Counsel
Partner and Employee Networks and Governing Structure	Environmental Reps Environmental Management Review Team Net Zero Working Group		Community Engagement Committees WBD Foundation Trustees	Family Network WBD Disability WBD Pride WBD Reach WBD Thrive	Apprenticeship Network	Sports and Social Committees Mental Health First Aiders Wellbeing Champions Menopause Champions Men's Wellbeing Group	Audit Group Risk Committee Conflict Group			
<b>WBD Board</b> <b>WBD Global Board</b> <b>Partner Representative Group</b> <b>Employee Forum</b>										

# OUR ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

We are held to high standards by society in all we do, and our Values, Principles and Ethical Standards help us understand and meet those expectations.



## OUR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS ACTIVITIES ARE UNDERPINNED BY TWO ESSENTIAL ACCOLADES: ECOVADIS AND INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

EcoVadis is a sustainability platform assessing our environmental, social and ethical performance. The assessment looks at four key areas: labour and human rights, ethics, procurement, and environment. We achieved Gold EcoVadis rating in Financial Year (FY) 2023/24 for the second year running, and are now ranked in the top 2% of companies reporting globally.

WBD received outstanding in environment, and advanced in both labour and human rights, and ethics in 2022, and in 2023 maintained those ratings whilst increasing our score in Environment, Ethics and Procurement. To achieve this, WBD made several changes in the preceding 12 months, including: introducing a sustainable procurement strategy, finalising an extensive scope 3 carbon emissions report to inform our carbon reduction plans, taking actions to prevent discrimination in professional development and promotion processes, and achieving silver Investors in People 'We Invest in Wellbeing'.



**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®**  
We invest in people Gold

In Spring 2022, we were delighted to achieve the Investors in People (IIP) Gold accreditation in the 'We Invest in People' framework. This puts the firm in the top 17% of around 50,000 organisations in 66 countries globally and in the top 27% of law firms who participate.

The achievement recognises the firm's continued and advanced commitment to our biggest asset, our people. The IIP process and accreditation gives us a platform to receive advice, support and, most importantly, develop and implement a clear action plan on continuously improving workplace culture, particularly around employee engagement, communication, organisational culture and work practices.

The process is firmly embedded in our business with input at all levels, from role-modelling and influence from our Board and Partner Group to engagement from colleagues on the ground in regular benchmarking surveys.

# WE HAVE ALIGNED OUR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS GOALS WITH THE UN'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all by addressing the global challenges the world is facing. Using the SDG Action Manager tool we have identified the SDGs which we, as a firm, have the most impact on. The tool has enabled us to map out our contribution to each SDG and highlight areas for improvement across our operations, supply chain and business model. We will be using the results of this exercise to inform our own Responsible Business Goals, introduce meaningful change, and track our progress.

The SDG Action Manager highlighted the following SDGs that WBD has the most opportunity to contribute towards.

SDG 1 - No Poverty

SDG 3 - Good Health & Wellbeing

SDG 4 - Quality Education

SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities

SDG 13 - Climate Action

SDG 16 - Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions

Whilst it is these SDGs which we will focus our efforts on, the Action Manager highlighted areas across all SDGs where we can improve our contribution. We will continue to use the tool to monitor our progress against all goals as we strive to introduce more sustainable practices across the business.

## WBD SUPPORTS THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





# ENVIRONMENT

Having a positive impact on the world around us

## 2023/24 progress update

### Key stats:

- 66.1% of the electricity purchased across our sites was renewable.
- Donated £1,000 to the National Trust to help plant trees.
- Carried out carbon reporting and certification with Planet Mark for the seventh year.
- Held seven film screenings of Save Our Wild Isles across our offices as part of EnviroNovember. This month long campaign run by our Enviro Reps encouraged colleagues to take steps to reduce their carbon footprint.
- Reduced emissions associated with energy use at our buildings in Newcastle by 40.61% since our 2019/20 baseline year.

### Net zero and carbon emissions:

- Published our Net Zero Action Plan, which sets out our commitment to achieving net zero along with a clear governance framework, ensuring transparency and accountability in terms of our decarbonisation strategy.
- Measured our extended scope 3 carbon emissions for Financial Year (FY) 2022/23 and achieved a 57.4% reduction in commuting emissions and 56.1% reduction in business commuting emissions from the baseline year (2019/20).
- Launched a commuting survey during Net Zero Week to capture how our people commute to and from work.
- Shared updates from our suppliers, Commercial Group, Agilico and CH&Co, on steps they're taking to support our carbon emissions reduction such as sustainable product alternatives, reducing our MFD fleet through mapping work spaces, and Meat Free Mondays.
- Solar panels were installed on the office building we occupy in Plymouth.
- Launched a one-hour crash course on net zero for all employees, hosted by the Planet Mark.

### Awards and recognition:

- ISO 14001 re-accredited, recognising that we have an effective Environmental Management System, providing a framework for continuous improvement in our environmental performance.
- Achieved a perfect score of 100 for the Environment in the EcoVadis sustainability rating.
- Listed in the inaugural Legal 500 Green Guide as one of the top law firms leading the way on climate change.
- At The Legal 500 ESG UK Awards Jon Bower was shortlisted for and won the Environmental/ Sustainability: Private Practice Champion Award (results announced May 2024).
- Recognised as a Net Zero Hero by Team London Bridge in their Upskilling and Knowledge Sharing category for appointing a network of 30 environmental reps to engage colleagues.



### Examples of clients we have advised:

- Ran a Climate Change Litigation presentation for clients around the topic of recent and future trends in climate change litigation, why it matters to business and how clients can minimise their risk.
- Provided support on key intellectual property matters as part of a campaign from the national water regulator, Ofwat, to foster new innovations for the sector. WBD's IP strategist Alison Orr provided expertise to competing innovations and projects as part of economic water regulator Ofwat's Water Discovery Challenge, which saw 20 innovative projects from outside the sector receive up to £50,000 to develop their innovations, with access to a range of expert support such as IP from WBD and mentoring from water companies.
- Advised AA on their move to a new home, read more about this on page 23.
- Advised Fera Science Limited, a leading global expert in sustainable agricultural practices and innovations in food production, on a deal that sees Bridgepoint Development Capital acquire a 75% stake which gives the business an enterprise value of £80m.
- Advised RES, one of the world's largest independent renewable energy companies, on its new green hydrogen joint venture, HYRO, with Octopus Energy Generation.

### Memberships:

- Founding and active executive member of the Legal Sustainability Alliance.
- Planet Mark.
- Sustainable Recruitment Alliance.
- Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership.
- Team London Bridge.
- Redcliffe and Temple BID.
- Energy and Environment Alliance.
- Hydrogen South West.

### Teams contributing to the environment:

- 30 Environmental Reps.
- Environmental Management Review Team and the Net Zero Working Group, both of which consist of key stakeholders from across the business including Facilities, IT, Risk, and Responsible Business.

### UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS



“Carrying out environmental volunteering is an integral part of our environmental programme at the firm. Whether it’s litter picking, helping in a garden or allotment, or something else, getting outside in nature is important for us all.”

**Martha Payne, Responsible Business Apprentice**

Martha Payne volunteering at a local allotment, January 2024.



## WBD HAS BECOME A MEMBER OF THE BRISTOL CLIMATE & NATURE PARTNERSHIP

This year we have become a member of Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership's Climate Leaders Group.

The Climate Leaders Group is for organisations in Bristol who are being ambitious by setting goals to be carbon neutral by 2030 and creating plans to reduce their emissions. WBD has set a target to be net zero by 2030, mapped out its baseline emissions, and created a net zero action plan to reduce emissions from these baseline figures.

The Climate Leaders use this space to connect with others. As a member of the group, we will be sharing our own experiences of our journey to net zero to support, motivate and inspire others, with the goal of accelerating the city of Bristol's progress towards becoming carbon neutral.

To celebrate the start of our membership, we were happy to take part in the Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership Green Tenancy Breakfast in February, sharing our experience of decarbonising as a commercial tenant.

We also shared a case study of our environmental journey which can be read [here](#).

**Bex Shreeve, Engagement Officer at Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership, said:**

"We're delighted to have Womble Bond Dickinson as a member of our Climate Leaders Group.

With such a brilliant track record of delivering innovative climate action, it has been hugely valuable to have the Womble Bond Dickinson team share their insights and experience with our group and our wider network.

Since connecting in 2023, the team have actively supported our programme by speaking at events, contributing to resources and case studies and offering inspiration to other Bristol organisations."



**Mat Swift**  
Environment, Health & Safety Manager

From left to right, Bex Shreeve (Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership), Mat Swift from WBD, and another panel member, at the Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership Climate Breakfast Green Commercial Tenancy event.

# Q&A WITH OUR ENVIRONMENTAL REPS

## 1. Why did you become an environmental rep?

Deborah: I've always been interested in the environment – I studied an environmental law module at university, married an environmental scientist and thought I would change the world as a lawyer for Greenpeace. That last bit didn't quite happen but I decided to apply to be a rep to add value at work, and as a partner, lead by example.

Harry: My MA dissertation was on the politics of conservation and I worked on a project to increase the involvement of local people in Newcastle's green spaces. When I joined the firm I wanted to continue promoting green initiatives and becoming a rep has given me that opportunity.

## 2. What have you been involved in as a rep so far?

Deborah: I haven't been a rep for long but I attended the first Sustainability Session with Planet Mark, which was fantastic, and I'm looking forward to the next session in the series.

Harry: We put on a screening of Save Our Wild Isles during EnviroNovember,

followed by a Q&A. More recently, we set up two volunteering sessions with Urban Green which involved litter picking and maintenance. Both sessions were well received and led to team days being booked in with the charity.

## 3. What's the value of having environmental reps?

Deborah: Being a rep will add value to the advice I give on how to incorporate some of the ESG aims within a procurement process. For the firm, it's critically important we demonstrate our ESG credentials – because (a) it is the right thing to do (b) clients expect it and (c) it can help give us an advantage when we tender for work. Having reps means staff at all levels of the firm can make a

positive contribution and spread the relevant information to their teams.

Harry: Having reps has been great for delivering a localised focus and providing more opportunities to get involved. Being a rep not only helps a great cause but it is also a brilliant way to meet people and build relationships.



**Deborah Ramshaw**  
Partner



**Harry Cussons**  
Executive Research &  
Knowledge Analyst



Our environmental reps and colleagues volunteering with Urban Green, Newcastle.



## SUPPORTING ITS ENVIRONMENTAL AMBITIONS, WBD HELPS THE AA MOVE TO A NEW SUSTAINABLE HOME

WBD has assisted the UK's leading roadside assistance provider, The AA, with a relocation to new premises housed in the historic Grade II listed redevelopment of Basingstoke's Mountbatten House.

Moving from its former home of Fanum House where the organisation had been based for 50 years, The AA will now operate out of nearby development The Plant, which delivers a modern, best-in-class office fit for the needs of the association. The Plant is targeting an EPC A and BREEAM Outstanding ratings through its design and extensive roof gardens, which will provide a more sustainable home for The AA.

Aligning with its organisational goals to modernise and achieve environmental

ambitions, The AA will take over a quarter of the space at the new development on a 15 year lease. The AA is scheduled to move to The Plant later in 2024.

**Alistair Walton, Partner at Womble Bond Dickinson, said:**

"It has been excellent supporting the AA to help realise its long-term ambitions through the move into a new space where sustainability and modernity are at the heart of the development."



**Alistair Walton**  
Partner



# SOCIAL

## Community Engagement

Making a tangible difference in our communities



Our planning team used their team day to volunteer in Bristol.

## 2023/24 progress update

### Fundraising and donations:

- Donated 99 iPhones, 26 laptops and six desktop screens to our local charity partners to support their work in the community.
- Supported our ten chosen charities (focusing on our national theme of social inclusion) and worthy causes through WBD and the WBD Foundation. This amounted to £139,532.35, of which £121,600.40 came from the WBD Foundation, and £17,931.95 from the LLP.
  - These donations enabled us to support our charity partners in a variety of ways, including sponsoring a young person's career development programme, enabling a foodbank to provide Valentines Day chocolates to its users, aiding the purchase of new equipment for a dementia-friendly allotment and equipment for a new food warehouse, and enabling school children to attend a farm residential.
- 112 employees took part in the Access to Justice Legal Walks across the UK, with WBD organising walks in Plymouth and Newcastle.
- 14 employees cycled from Southampton to Bristol, raising £4,665 for Alive Activities.
- Raised over £3,600 through WBDbay, our firmwide virtual auction helping support all of our chosen charities, with clients and suppliers donating prizes.
- Donated £30,000 through our WBD Foundation in light of our Disaster Response Policy. £10,000 was donated to the Libya Floods Appeal, £10,000 to the Morocco Earthquake Appeal, and £10,000 to the Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territory Appeal.
- 51 colleagues took advantage of our match funding for causes they care about. They took part in events such as The Great Bristol Run, Macmillan Coffee Morning and the London Landmarks Skyscraper Challenge.
- Ran an indoor cyclathon challenge in London. We raised £1,040 for Power2, including match funding from the WBD Foundation.
- Ran themed fundraising events in various offices such as an Easter Hunt in Bristol, a Valentines Day bake sale and treasure hunt in Newcastle and a Christmas raffle in Leeds.
- WBD's Private Wealth team organised a client quiz night to raise funds for WBD's Bristol Office charity partner, Alive Activities, raising £3,250.

### Volunteering:

- Updated our definition of volunteering to include mentoring so that we are fairly recognising and capturing our employees time.
- Gave 1,328 hours to local charities across the UK through volunteering, for example as reading helpers through St Peter's Reading Scheme, as mentors with Envision Mentoring, and as kitchen staff at The People's Kitchen.
- Five teams used their team days to volunteer together. They helped with charities including St Werberghs City Farm, Solent Youth Action and YMCA Plymouth.
- Our volunteers gardened, helped to manage woodland, packed food packs, read stories to children, mentored, and much more.

### Pro bono:

- Increased pro bono hours by 61% from FY 2022/23. One of the larger pro bono projects our people supported was Northumbria University's Global Spares Supply Chain Test Bed Project.
- Supported the World's first vagina museum in London to find a new home. You can read more about this on page 29.
- Continued to support the University of Law's Small Business Clinic by providing fortnightly volunteers for the clinic during term time. This continues to be one of our most popular opportunities.

### Other charitable support:

- Teesside office launched their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) committee and supported their first office charity partner. See story on page 33.
- Invited our charity partner, Alive Activities, to host dementia awareness training to our Bristol office, which we recorded and offered to others across the firm after the event. Helped to fund a book vending machine at St Peter's CE Primary School, Stonehouse in Plymouth, and ran a Story Telling Project to encourage reading.
- 11 organisations used our office spaces for free.
- A team of four Padelers represented WBD at a charity event in Bristol sponsored by St Peter's Hospice.
- Took part in the Battle of the Business netball tournament in Newcastle to raise money for Mind Teesside.

### Awards:

- Retained the Bronze Payroll Giving Mark.
- Nazmin Akhtar, Associate, was named a Coronation Champion in recognition of her outstanding commitment to volunteering.

- Hosted the final of a Leeds-wide debating competition aiming to unearth the next generation of skilled speakers as headline partner of public discussion forum, The Leeds Salon, in its school debating competition. Open to students in years 10 and 11, the contest sees teams of two arguing for and against motions across a range of wide topics, and is designed to give participants the chance to build debating and public speaking skills and develop their critical thinking.
- WBD, Evelyn Partners, and the Newcastle Building Society sponsored the launch of Community Foundation Tyne & Wear's new North East Roots fund in October 2023. The fund aims to create opportunities, reduce inequalities, and sustain the region.

### Members contributing to community engagement:

- 127 CSR members in eight CSR committees.
- Two Pro Bono volunteer coordinators.
- WBD Foundation Trustees (five partners).

### UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS



“Volunteering is an essential part of giving back to the community, but also a great way to look after our own wellbeing. We had a great day preparing one of Alive Activities’ dementia-friendly allotments.”

Charlotte von Sicard, Senior Responsible Business Manager

Four colleagues volunteering with our Bristol office's charity partner, Alive Activities.



## WBD HELPS WORLD'S FIRST VAGINA MUSEUM FIND A NEW HOME

Staff in our Newcastle and London offices have provided pro bono services to help ensure the world's first Vagina Museum was able to find a new home. A 15-person strong WBD team worked to finalise the deal, ensuring the lease was quickly completed following the granting of planning permission.

London's Vagina Museum, which was forced to shut its doors in February 2023 after its property guardianship ended, has now reopened in a larger location on Bethnal Green's Poyser Street after WBD secured the lease to the new property.

The museum, which works to reduce the stigma and instead celebrate gynaecological anatomy, will now be able to house exhibitions across three gallery spaces, alongside a café and space for workshops and performances.

WBD's team for the deal was split into several smaller groups to ensure a wide spread of skills and areas could be covered, including associate Nazmin Akthar, who helped to deal with the title due diligence elements. Nazmin said: "We are all thrilled that this deal was able to complete smoothly and we have been able to help the Vagina Museum and

ensure this critically important cultural spot can continue operations. This project was one where a lot of the team were passionate about getting involved and giving back through pro bono work as well as developing their skills in a wider range of legal tasks. Most importantly we were able to assist the museum in a swift reopening through a focused negotiation and quick turnaround."

**Zoe Williams, Interim Director, at the Vagina Museum, said:**

"We couldn't have reopened without the help from Womble Bond Dickinson. As a charity, we have very limited financial resources at our disposal, and wouldn't have known where to start. Thanks to the kind and practical pro bono support we received, we reopened last week, and almost 1000 people have already visited."



**Nazmin Akthar**  
Associate

# TACKLING LONELINESS WITH YMCA PLYMOUTH

In February, WBD's Operational Property team hosted an event for local residents who are members of YMCA Plymouth's Y's Group. The Y's Group is a group of over 65s who are suffering from loneliness, isolation and, in some cases, bereavement due to the loss of their lifelong partners. For many, the Y's group has become a vital part of their lives, allowing them to form new friendships, break down social barriers and prevent them from feeling isolated and lonely.

WBD organised a fun-filled afternoon, with afternoon tea and a quiz. Staff also took the time to sit and talk to the guests to find out about their lives, their interests and their experiences.

Sarah Newberry, Youth, Family and Fundraising Manager at YMCA Plymouth, said:

"I work with this group on an ongoing basis and the impact that this sort of event has is incredible. Many of them live in sheltered housing and are really suffering from isolation and loneliness. Due to having little or no funds they only have access to rare treats and outings such as through the work that we do here at the YMCA. What you all did was not only extremely generous but beautifully delivered, making a group of elderly residents feel valued.

From the moment we arrived we were all treated like royalty, waited on hand and foot by a warm and friendly team. Nothing was too much trouble and the group really appreciated that the staff sat with them and took time to chat about their lives and experiences (this was the most valued thing).

The afternoon finished with a very competitive quiz with plenty of debate, great fun and we all left smiling away."

Volunteering as part of a team day is a great way for our colleagues to come together and give back to local communities. We were so pleased to be able to host this event for YMCA Plymouth.



**Alison Morden-Hawke**  
Associate (PDL)

Our WBD Operational Property team hosting members of YMCA Plymouth's Y's Group.





Women in Chemicals event in Teesside, where our office raised money for the Hope Foundation.

## TEESSIDE AND THE HOPE FOUNDATION PARTNERSHIP

Following the firm's expanding presence in Teesside, WBD's Teesside office launched its first Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) committee to widen its charitable support in the north east.

Like our other offices, Teesside CSR has spent the year in partnership with a local charity which focuses on improving social inclusion. For Teesside, this is the Hope Foundation, which is a charity dedicated to providing opportunities for people in Middlesborough to learn and access technology, careers advice, volunteering opportunities and support, with the aim of reducing disadvantage, loneliness and isolation.

Our partnership with the Hope Foundation allows us to provide more focussed and impactful support to the charity. The Teesside office has had a really successful first year. The CSR committee, with the support of the office, has provided a prize for the charity's Tees Tech Awards raffle fundraiser, provided catering for their event, and covered the costs of Christmas lunch for 35 service users. Four volunteers from the office also went along to help provide an extra pair of hands for their Christmas lunch.

The firm and WBD Foundation have donated £3,543 to the charity this year, which wouldn't be possible without the fantastic fundraising efforts by the office, including a raffle at an event focusing on diversity in the chemicals sector and participation in the firmwide charity auction, WBDbay.

We are also delighted to have been able to donate 43 iPhones and 16 laptops to the charity. These have been used to help improve people's access to and confidence with technology, including being used by digital midwives (NHS) to support women who would otherwise have no access to a private mobile phone during their pregnancy.

We are really excited to see how this partnership will develop over the next year, and how we can continue to increase our engagement with the community in the local area.



**Sarah Daun**  
Partner



**Hope Gallant**  
Trainee Solicitor



# SOCIAL

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Creating a diverse and inclusive workplace

## 2023/24 progress update

### Strategic focuses:

- Achieved UK Mansfield Certification – aimed at improving diversity by considering 30% diverse candidates for 70% of internal roles, promotions and participation in pitch meetings. For Mansfield this includes: disability, gender, LGBTQ+, race and ethnicity. As part of this we have made our career paths more transparent, shared information on leadership roles and how to achieve them and changed our promotions process. We aim to make further improvements to increase diversity in all job categories and expand the principles to all roles in our business, not just the specified lawyer roles that Mansfield requires.
- Ranked 62nd in the top 100 companies in the Stonewall Index in 2024.
- Achieved Disability Confident Leader status which included a number of changes to our business. You can read more about this on page 39.
- Continued to build on our DEI data completion rate. We are now at 84% completion which allows us to support and structure our DEI strategy.
- Signed up to the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Membership. Training and awareness will be rolled out in the business in Financial Year (FY) 2024/25.
- Recruited WBD's first Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Paul Britton.
- Rolled out Active Bystander Training to all colleagues. This training was aimed to help colleagues feel confident in responding to, or challenging, poor behaviours which may be one-off or have become normalised over time. 99% of our people completed the training in FY 2023/24.

### Recruitment:

- Overhauled our recruitment processes to be more accessible for disabled candidates, embedding the guaranteed interview scheme, launching an accessibility tool on our careers website and using inclusive imagery.
- Alongside Vercida, launched advertising on Bridge of Hope.
- Streamlined the Early Talent application process to make it more accessible by simplifying our application form and removing the essay question in favour of a blended online assessment that measures potential, in line with our recently refreshed Early Talent behavioural framework.
- Created the WBD Early Talent Hiring Community, a group of colleagues who will be involved throughout the entire Early Talent recruitment cycle, who are committed to recruiting candidates with potential, and who understand the importance of DEI as part of each stage of recruitment.
- Continued to use the RARE Contextual Recruitment System, which measures social disadvantage and academic performance in context, allowing us to identify top talent from diverse backgrounds.
- Adopted a strength-based interview for our Early Talent recruitment: we look for potential rather than past experience, reflected in our behavioural framework and measurable indicators.
- Shared DEI resources with prospective candidates, including relevant networks and contact details should they wish to speak to a DEI network member during the recruitment process.
- Further developed our DEI Recruitment Network, a collaboration of DEI network members and the recruitment team, with the objectives of reducing all bias from our recruitment process, broadening the diversity of our talent pools and embedding DEI into our recruitment DNA.
- Established focus groups within the recruitment team to partner with each of our networks to develop and progress our DEI recruitment plans.
- Worked with head-hunters and recruitment agents to highlight our DEI priorities and, where appropriate, ensure diverse shortlists are presented to the firm.



Four of our DEI Network Leads attending the LexisNexis Legal Awards 2024 where we were shortlisted for Diversity and Inclusion.

## DEI Networks:

- Held a DEI Network Leads' Strategy Day to celebrate successes and discuss opportunities to provide further support and drive strategy forward.
- Adopted the Halo Code, the UK's first Black hair code aimed at protecting the rights of staff who come to work with natural hair and protective hairstyles associated with their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities.
- Adopted the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles as part of our commitment to promoting gender equality. More on page 47.
- Marked Neurodiversity Celebration Week for the second year through the ADHD Foundation's Neurodiversity Umbrella Project, launched sensory kits for everyone and hosted a webinar with Educating Matters on Managing and Supporting neurodiverse colleagues.
- Updated our website to include comprehensive accessibility information about each office, eliminating the need for visitors to request this separately.
- Marked Pride History month through a Pride History Talk.
- Celebrated Ramadan by offering dates, a popular snack, to our employees, promoting our Faith and Wellbeing rooms, and sharing colleagues' personal stories.
- WBD Reach marked Black History Month by welcoming CARGO (Charting African Resilience Generating Opportunities) Movement to our London office and sharing about their project "CARGO Classroom". You can read more on this on page 44.
- Worked with our catering supplier to provide halal food, improve menus and raise awareness around halal for Islamophobia Awareness month.
- WBD Disability have partnered with DiversityLab in the UK, US and Canada and spoken at events including with the UK Law Society.
- Introduced DEI libraries in all office locations with books that employees can borrow and return.

## Examples of clients and other businesses we have worked with:

- Emily Cox, Associate, delivered Neurodiversity and Reasonable Adjustments training to Paramount Global alongside a US lawyer from Nelson Mullins.
- Celebrated Leeds Pride by hosting a pre-Pride celebration event in our office with Building Equality, an alliance of construction consultants, engineers, developers, contractors, and institutions who are passionate about working together and harnessing our collective power to drive LGBTQIA+ inclusion.
- Brought together leading individuals in the North East chemicals and process community for a panel event focusing on diversity in the chemicals sector in Teesside, chaired by Managing Associate, Emma Welch who helps lead our women's network, WBD Thrive. The panel shared their personal career journeys and their views on how to influence gender diversity and effect change.
- WBD's IP team are assisting with the wider rollout of the ADAPT programme (Advancing Diversity Across Patent Teams) within the UK and European markets, providing initial assistance on career frameworks and potential pathways to individuals looking to enter the profession through its mentoring and research activities.
- For Pride Month, we hosted an event in our London office to hear from Jude Guaitamacchi, LGBTQIA+ Advocate, first non-binary face of Harrods Beauty and Tedx Speaker followed by a panel with some of our clients. More on page 43.

## Memberships and awards:

- Member Business Disability Forum.
- Shortlisted for Diversity and Inclusion at the LexisNexis Legal Awards 2024.
- Shortlisted in the inaugural Legal 500 ESG UK Awards 2024 in the Disability / Neurodiversity: Best Initiative to Attract and Retain Talent category, as well as individual shortlists for both Emily Cox and Michelle Essen in Disability/Neurodiversity: Private Practice Champion.
- Shortlisted for Diversity and Inclusion Firm of the Year at The Legal 500 Northern Powerhouse Awards.
- WBD Disability Network shortlisted for Ability Network of the Year at the British Diversity Awards 2024.
- Disability Confident Leader.
- Shortlisted for The Equality Trailblazer Award at The Devon & Plymouth Chamber of Commerce Awards 2023, and were highly commended.

## Members contributing to DEI:

- WBD Disability Network.
- Family Network.
- WBD Pride Network (LGBTQ+).
- WBD Reach Network (Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage).
- WBD Thrive Network (Women).

## UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS



Our WBD Reach (Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage) Network's northern offices get together at the Newcastle office.



Our Disability Network Steering Group.

## DISABILITY CONFIDENT LEADERS

We have achieved Disability Confident Leader in recognition of our commitment to recruiting, retaining and supporting people with disabilities and long-term conditions.

Disability Confident Leader is the highest accreditation in the Department for Work and Pensions' Disability Confident scheme. Since being awarded 'Employer' status in 2018, we have continued to raise disability awareness and inclusion through wide-ranging initiatives and improving policies and practices. After rigorous external assessment, we were awarded 'Leader' status in March 2024.

This accreditation demonstrates our commitment to lead the way on disability inclusion, in recruitment and for our people, as well as to help other businesses become disability confident. We are one of only five UK law firms to achieve this prestigious accreditation, reflecting our true commitment to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace where everyone can thrive.

The firm's Disability Network, launched in 2021, provides assistance and guidance and implements positive changes for employees with disabilities and long term conditions, as well as allies and advocates. This includes working with the business to make our invitations and events more accessible, ensure our website contains comprehensive accessibility information for visitors, review HR policies through a disability lens, while creating a safe space for our people to ask questions or make suggestions.

Recruitment has enhanced our processes to ensure that they are fair and accessible for disabled candidates, such as implementing the guaranteed interview scheme, providing alternative formats for application materials, and using DEI job boards.

**Michelle Essen, Chair of the WBD Disability Network said:**

"Achieving Disability Confident Leader has taken a huge amount of time, effort and commitment from so many amazing people across our business, with a special thanks to our Disability Confident Leader Working Group, and Disability Network Steering Group. Changing how we think and do things takes tremendous will and determination, but our WBD community has embraced the challenge – and we can see that in how our business is more accessible, celebrating neurodiversity, providing sensory kits, introducing a reasonable adjustments policy, investing in training, sharing IT tips, and simply talking about disability far more openly. And it doesn't stop here - we have further plans underway to continue to raise awareness and drive disability inclusion."



**Michelle Essen**  
Legal Director

## SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH A CARING RESPONSIBILITY

The Family Network is a network of people within the business who have a caring responsibility for a child, teenager or adult. The network gives people an opportunity to meet others within the business who have similar responsibilities at home or outside of work and share their experiences and challenges of managing a busy work and family life, and hopefully in turn be able to share some advice.

As well as providing valuable peer to peer connections, the network will also contribute to firm initiatives and developments so that all people with caring responsibilities feel more supported in the workplace.

Over the last 12 months we have been working to restructure the group and establish the best way for the network to be as effective as possible in both offering support to carers within the business and contribute to firm initiatives and developments. After speaking with the current network to gather feedback, the restructure is under way and we are now

working towards relaunching the group to the rest of the business in the summer.

Our aim for the relaunch is to make all colleagues with family and caring responsibilities aware of what the group is for, the support available and how they can get involved if they would like to. Following the relaunch, we will then establish initiatives that the group would like to achieve in the next 12 months and by raising the profile of the network we hope to engage with more colleagues who have family and caring responsibilities to help support them in the workplace.



**Lex Tansley**  
Legal Director



**Katy Ofield**  
HR Advisor





## SUPPORTING OUR LGBTQ+ COLLEAGUES

Our Pride Network continuously strives to create a workplace where everyone feels able to be themselves. Whether that's by creating a more inclusive environment, sharing experiences and highlighting challenges, or hosting events to raise awareness, the Network is making incredible steps forward to support our LGBTQ+ colleagues.

The work of the Network and the firm is recognised by Stonewall. In 2024, we received Stonewall's Gold Employer Award for the second year, and were ranked 62nd within Stonewall's Top 100 Employers. We are committed to maintaining our spot in the Top 100 and hope to rise even further over the coming years.

Over the last year the Network has held several events to support important months in the Pride calendar. In February we celebrated LGBTQ+ History Month by sharing some key facts and dates, and hosting a 'Pride History' talk and quiz, discussing intersectionality and inclusive language. We also celebrated Pride Month with an array of posts, a vlog takeover and learning lunches, culminating in a great event with Jude Guaitamacchi, who gave a talk on conscious and unconscious bias with

a push towards conscious inclusion. This talk was followed by a panel made up of some of WBD's top clients who spoke about their DEI groups and also the bias that they have faced throughout their lives and at work.

In addition to these events, we shared articles with staff to raise awareness of several key days such as International Non-Binary Persons Day, Pansexual and Panromantic Visibility Day, International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, and Bisexual Visibility Day.

As a firm and through our Pride Network, we will continue to work hard to support members of LGBTQ+ community. We will continue to actively discuss LGBTQ+ matters faced and work with and assist teams across the firm to continue to drive WBD's commitment to diversify our policies and recruitment strategies.



**James Clark**  
Managing Associate



**Jan Foster**  
Managing Associate

WBD Pride Network's Pride month event, 'moving from conscious and unconscious bias towards conscious inclusion'.

# WBD REACH (RACE, ETHNICITY AND CULTURE HERITAGE) – OUR ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Now in its fifth year, our Reach Network continues to go from strength to strength.

## Growing our community

We welcomed six new colleagues to the Reach Panel and appointed nine Reach Ambassadors across our offices.

## 10,000 Black Interns

We have expanded our support for 10,000 Black Interns by doubling the size of our intake and expanding to more offices.

## Halo Code

WBD adopted the Halo Code, the UK's first Black hair code. This is an important initiative to help break down stereotypes and eliminate race-based hair discrimination. We reviewed our dress code policy to reflect this commitment. We hope this empowers all our staff to have the freedom to wear their natural hairstyles.

## Events

Our events are designed to build a sense of community at WBD, and to raise awareness around different cultures. We hosted events for Black History Month, Muslim Heritage Month, Eid, Vaisakhi and Ram Navami. We also marked the month of Ramadan by giving out dates across our offices.

2024 marked the first year that Muslim Heritage Month was celebrated in the UK. We were pleased to be the first law firm to have formally celebrated it.

Baroness Shaista Gohir OBE, the founder of Muslim Heritage Month (a Muslim Women's Network UK initiative), has shared her thanks, stating:

"It is great that corporate organisations such as Womble Bond Dickinson are taking the lead in celebrating cultural diversity by marking Muslim Heritage Month. Not only does it help their own employees feel safe and welcome, but it also paves the way to make positive changes across the sector and wider community too."

To celebrate Black History Month, we had the pleasure of hosting CARGO movement for a client event at our London office. CARGO stands for Charting African Resilience Generating Opportunities. Founded by creative director and filmmaker Chaz Golding, and executive producer, poet and educator Dr Lawrence Hoo, the CARGO movement uses stories of strength and resilience from Black History to enable Black and other minoritised communities to reclaim their tools of empowerment and lay the foundations for a better and equitable future for all.



**Nathalie Romain**  
Partner, Head of WBD InHouse



**Suzanne Gado**  
Legal Director (PDL)



WBD Reach (Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage) Network's CARGO Movement event for Black History Month.



## WBD THRIVE: INCREASING ENGAGEMENT AND SHARING SUCCESSES

WBD Thrive, our women’s network, aims to connect and support WBD colleagues across all levels and roles within the firm, with a view to building a supportive environment where female clients and in-house lawyers can share and grow. This year, we have focussed our work into five main pillars which are: client engagement, external engagement, projects and accountability, partner engagement, and internal representation.

We are proud to have hosted lots of internal and external events. In September 2023, we hosted an internal event which focussed on the importance of allyship in creating a culture in which everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential. The event encouraged all colleagues to embrace the ally concept and build a more positive and supportive environment for all.

In late 2023, we launched our “Women in...” series, aimed at expanding our external reach to our client base, to understand the issues faced by women in particular sectors and to share initiatives and techniques to help support change. The series has reached more than 150 clients in the Technology, Property, and Chemical and Process sectors and we hope to continue the series with Women in Energy later this year. We also have plans to launch roundtable discussions and client focussed training to equip women with tools and knowledge to help them succeed.

In March 2024, WBD officially signed up to the UN Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs). By signing the WEPs, WBD joins a global network of more than 7,000 organisations dedicated to advancing gender equality and creating a more inclusive and sustainable economy. To celebrate International Women’s Day, and in conjunction with WBD Reach, we organised an online event for both clients and internal attendees, joined by Anita Asante, the former England midfielder who shared stories of teamwork, allyship and discussed how we can all contribute to building inclusive working environments.

We are pleased with our progress and grateful to our colleagues and clients who are willing to share openly their own insight so that others can continue to grow and develop. We will continue to drive progress and are excited to see the achievements of WBD Thrive next year.



**Jo Beattie-Edwards**  
Partner



**Jenny Elgie**  
Head of Business  
Planning and Analysis





## SOCIAL Social Mobility

Inspiring young people to unlock their potential



Three of WBD's solicitor apprentices, taken at their induction week in Newcastle, September 2022.

## 2023/24 progress update

### School engagement:

- The Early Talent team and Lauren Hall (one of our 5th year Solicitor Apprentices) helped deliver an apprenticeship awareness session at Oasis Academy Brislington. The session was delivered alongside Robert Halfon MP, Minister for Skills Apprenticeships & Higher Education to showcase how apprenticeships provide an alternative pathway for individuals who may face barriers to pursuing their careers due to financial constraints or lack of opportunities.
- Continued to partner with Forage to provide virtual work experience to young people considering a career in the legal sector. 217 students completed the full programme in 2023/24.
- Continued to run our mentoring programme with Oasis Academy, a programme that involved three workshops, 12 students and 15 WBD volunteers.
- Continued to take part in the Envision mentoring programme in Bristol. Six volunteers have supported young people in tackling a real-life social issue, whilst also giving them a valuable insight into the world of work through meaningful employer engagement.
- Continued to co-lead an initiative in the West of England, collaborating with 16 law firms to provide school outreach activities across the region with the

ultimate vision of ensuring every school and college in the region has access to and support from a law firm. This year there were 91 students on the programme from 19 different schools. Ran our Insight programme for a second year, which includes a variety of live webinars that students and parents/guardians can sign up to throughout the year to hear more about WBD, different roles at a law firm (both legal and business services) and routes into these careers. This year 39 students attended the sessions.

- Took part in the Big Interview in Southampton at Regents Park Community College, an event for their year 10 students to prepare for and undertake a mock interview as part of their career development.
- Supported the Careers Speed Dating event at Regents Park Community College, a morning of quick fire questions from the school's year nine students to help them learn about different professions and the various routes available to get into different careers.
- Continued to support Pathways To Law, a structured programme offering A-level students up to three days office-based work experience.

### Memberships and achievements:

- Climbed to 11th in the Social Mobility Employer Index 2023 (up from 41st in 2022 and 110th in 2021).
- Sam Lee, Head of Recruitment, was shortlisted in The Legal 500 ESG UK Awards for Social Mobility: Private Practice Champion.
- Founding members of PRIME, an alliance of law firms and in-house legal teams determined to improve access to, and socio-economic diversity within, the legal profession.
- A Cornerstone Employer in the West of England and current Chair.
- Member of West of England Legal Early Careers Network.

- Signatories to Social Mobility Pledge, which encourages organisations to be a force for good by putting social mobility at the heart of their purpose.
- Re-awarded Gold membership of The 5% Club after successfully completing their Employer Audit 2023/24. The audit recognises the UK's leading employers of apprentices, graduates and degree placement students – and provides invaluable benchmarking information for apprenticeship managers, graduate recruiters and senior management.

### University engagement, apprenticeships and other programmes:

- Following the success of our Commercial Law mentoring pilot scheme, we ran a second programme with the University of Greenwich. Students had access to three sessions from lawyers in the firm’s intellectual property (IP) team, led by IP Strategist Alison Orr, Solicitor Razvan Popa and Trainee Solicitor Danny Rand, and six sessions on commercial aspects, headed up by Trainee Solicitor Matt Wright. These sessions included a Q&A with WBD’s Graduate Recruitment team, negotiation exercises, commercial analysis, mock presentations to a client and legal drafting activities, with every session aiming to include mentees and mentor interaction allowing for questions and long-term networks to form.
- Ellie Gadsby passed her six-year apprenticeship at WBD’s Newcastle office becoming one of the first apprentices in the North East region to qualify via the Solicitor Apprenticeship route.
- Working in collaboration with social mobility charity STRIVE, we hosted 40 students at our London office to share our experiences and how the firm is breaking down barriers. We also continued to sponsor their Supernova Programme, which supports aspiring commercial lawyers who are looking for vacation schemes and training contracts. See more information on page 57.
- Recruited six new apprentices into roles at the firm with a further two enrolments to support existing team members’ progression.
- Hosted an insight day for University of Greenwich law students alongside volunteers from AIG.
- Supported the launch of a new Care Leavers Mentoring programme in Southampton for young people who have grown up in the care system and are now transitioning to independence. We are encouraging our people, and others across the city, to get involved through mentoring.

### Members contributing to social mobility:

- Early Careers Ambassador Network.
- Early Talent Team.

### UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS



“Taking part in a reading scheme at a local school is often the highlight of my week. It’s brilliant to see the pupils progressing in their learning, and playing a small part in that.”  
 Nikki Jonas, CSR Partner, Plymouth

Nikki Jonas and Declan Walker at a local school for World Book Day.



Rebecca Dennis (far right) with other solicitor apprentices and trainees at our induction week.

## EXPERIENCING A SOLICITOR APPRENTICESHIP

Rebecca Dennis, a trainee solicitor in the Bristol office, talks through her experience of being on the solicitor apprenticeship scheme, which combines studying for an LLB and the SQE exams alongside working at the firm. The scheme is 6 years and, once completed, Rebecca will be a fully qualified solicitor. She is currently in her 5th year.

### Why did you decide to do an apprenticeship?

The exposure apprentices have to law and the wider business is invaluable, and I don't feel I've missed out by not going to university full time. It's been great experience working with clients on a variety of work, and more widely with various events and fundraisers at the firm. I thought an apprenticeship was the best way to get a realistic view of the firm I'd like to work for, and what specific area of law I'd like to work in.

### What has your apprenticeship offered you?

I've had the opportunity to work with a range of teams and seniority levels, which has been a huge help in developing relationships and getting a deeper level of experience. The firm has helped shape me professionally and personally, and I've been guided by people who have already qualified and have experience balancing both work and study.

### How does WBD support you on your apprenticeship?

WBD has provided me with study days to complete my university work, exam and study leave, and calls to discuss how I'm progressing, as well as useful guidance ranging from interpersonal skills and network building, to how to manage your time and set work life balance boundaries.

The wider WBD Apprentice Network also gives an opportunity for all apprentices to have a community despite doing very different apprenticeships.

### What are your plans post apprenticeship and for career progression?

Once qualified, I'd like to remain at WBD and continue to develop individually and professionally. I'd love to become an expert in what I'm doing, whilst supporting the networks and charities I value. And, should I decide it's right for me, I would like to become a partner in 10 years.



**Rebecca Dennis**  
Solicitor Apprentice

## 10,000 BLACK INTERNS

10,000 Black Interns was founded in 2022 with the aim of increasing the availability of opportunities to under-represented groups by way of paid internships with businesses spanning various industries. The project hopes to facilitate 10,000 internships.

In summer 2023, we hosted our first two interns as part of the project. They were with us for a six week paid internship and based in our London office. Both were allocated a buddy, who was a member of our WBD Reach (Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage) Network, to be on hand to answer any questions about us, the legal sector or anything else.

After the success in 2023, we are pleased to be taking part again in 2024, this time hosting interns in our London and Newcastle offices, and also welcoming two interns from the 10,000 Able Interns programme in Bristol.

One participant shared their experiences of being an intern with us:

“I have nothing but good things to say about my experience as an Intern here at Womble Bond Dickinson. On my first day, I was welcomed by trainees in the Banking and Financial Services team. They were

very friendly and introduced me to other colleagues at the firm who were just as kind.

It has also been great to witness the massive efforts the firm invests in events and activities to ensure diversity and inclusion is present in different aspects of the firm, as well as promoting mental health awareness and checks. These have given me the opportunity to network and enhance my skills which have all had a positive impact in my decision on what area I should consider for the next step in my career.

Not only have I met some amazing people, I have also gained exposure to the real life work of a solicitor. Womble Bond Dickinson is an amazing firm with good values and culture. It has been a pleasure to join the team in London as an Intern.”

We are looking forward to hosting more interns in summer 2024.



**Skye Fenton-Wells**  
Early Talent Recruitment Manager





## HOSTING A SOCIAL MOBILITY EVENT WITH STRIVE

STRIVE is a social mobility charity which is committed to sourcing and developing talent from intersectionally diverse, socially mobile, and under-represented backgrounds to help individuals develop their skills and realise their true potential.

In December 2023, in collaboration with STRIVE, we hosted 40 students at our London office and gave them an insight into actions we are taking to break down barriers for entry to law. Students were also given the opportunity to share their own experiences and speak to some of our colleagues.

The event was led by our Early Talent team and featured Managing Partner, Paul Stewart, who delivered a talk highlighting our commitment to social mobility and affirmation that diversity in the workplace not only enriches the professional environment, but accelerates innovation and success.

Paul was joined by Partners Jonathan Blair and Will Fraser, and our London based Trainee Solicitors to allow for students to get a full understanding of the challenges and opportunities which exist while working in the sector.

Bertilla Chow, STRIVE's Chief Operations Officer, said:

"We've had absolutely phenomenal feedback from the students during the event and subsequently many have expressed how genuinely they felt the firm cared about social mobility as a cause. The students shared how the Lawyers, Trainees and Early Talent team clearly have a deep, often personal connection with Social Mobility."

We are a proud sponsor of STRIVE's Supernova programme, the charity's flagship and industry leading social mobility access scheme for future commercial lawyers. It supports undergraduates and graduates looking for vacation schemes and training contracts.



**Keith Mitchelhill**  
Early Talent Recruitment Advisor

Keith Mitchelhill (presenting) at the STRIVE social mobility event in London.



# SOCIAL

## Wellbeing

Providing a safe and supportive working environment where people can flourish

## 2023/24 progress update

### Wellbeing strategy:

- On the back of our strategy day, with input and feedback from Investors in People and in consultation with our Wellbeing Champions, we updated the wellbeing strategy so that it was more straightforward and specific.
- It now covers our aims and approach to positive working culture and practices, refers to a shared responsibility for wellbeing, the power of role modelling, the promotion of wellbeing best practice, the sharing of information and wellbeing resources, and a desire to improve engagement with events and campaigns.
- We have also developed two key objectives for 2023-2025. Our Wellbeing Champions are now divided into two working groups focused on these objectives:
  - Working positively - to promote a positive, high performing culture across all teams, by identifying and supporting healthy working practices and advocating these practices throughout our business.
  - Expansion of the Wellbeing Champions group - raising the profile of the group and of wellbeing activity and resources.
- Launched the Men's Wellbeing Group – story page 63. As one of their first events they organised and carried out litter picking in each of our office locations. Alongside the group, we launched a new page on the Hub promoting the work of the group and linking back to the Men's Health page which shares information on a range of concerns and conditions experienced by men, and highlights internal and external support and resources.

### Support provided:

- Carried out Mindful Business Charter (MBC) workshops in February and April with the Employee Forum group and a sub-team of Wellbeing Champions – to collect feedback on avoidable stress. Followed up with a Partner and Business Service Director meeting in May 2024.
- Completed Managing Mental Health training for line managers. We are now looking at ways to continue to support our managers going forward.
- Our Menopause Champions hosted a talk on "Rethink Menopause" which focused on the perimenopause and promoted the free period products available in our offices to mark World Menopause Day.
- Launched a new intranet page to promote LawCare's resources and support available to those working in the legal sector.
- Continued to encourage Wellbeing Groups to organise local activity to support the four pillars of wellbeing, particularly 'connections'. Events have included Massages, Wellbeing Walks, Fitness Challenges and 'Tea and Talk' Drop Ins. Our Bristol office have also launched an office choir.
- Launched a new Employee Assistance Programme app to make the EAP more accessible anywhere and anytime. As part of the launch we hosted a webinar lead by Unum showcasing the new offering.
- In September, to support people ahead of the cost of Christmas and the annual flexible benefit window we ran a Financial Wellbeing week sharing tips on how to flex your benefits and ways in which you can help your money go further. This was led by one of our Wellbeing Champions who also shared her own personal money story.
- Installed defibrillators across all offices and trained First Aiders.
- Refresher training given to both Mental Health First Aiders and Physical First Aiders.
- During Mental Health Awareness Week 2023 we highlighted the Mental Health Foundation's theme on Anxiety and took the opportunity to promote and raise the awareness of our Wellbeing Champions, our Mental Health First Aiders, and the newly formed Men's Wellbeing Group and the work they have done.
- On World Suicide Prevention Day we marked the day to raise awareness of suicide and suicide prevention, sharing tips that people can easily remember and do, as well as sharing powerful stories from our people on how they have been impacted by suicide.
- We've taken away the waiting period for people to receive sick pay and family leave pay, improved family leave pay, introduced paid carer's leave, introduced neonatal leave and emergency leave.

A group taking part in one of our wellbeing walks.

### Members contributing to wellbeing:

- Wellbeing Champions.
- Mental Health First Aiders.
- Physical First Aiders.
- Menopause Champions.
- Men's Wellbeing Group.
- Sports and Social Committees.

### UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS



“Opportunities to come together with colleagues and get active are a great way to look after your wellbeing. We were pleased to enter a team into the Battle of the Business netball tournament and give back to charity at the same time.”

Laura Tokell, Senior HR Project Executive

A group of colleagues from our Newcastle office taking part in Battle of the Business mixed netball tournament in March 2024.



Litter picking activity in Plymouth which was the first in-person event that our Men's Wellbeing Group ran across each location.

## INTRODUCING THE MEN'S WELLBEING GROUP

### What is the Men's Wellbeing Group?

The Men's Wellbeing Group provides peer to peer support on a range of different topics – primarily raising awareness of issues affecting men, encouraging men to talk more openly, and helping signpost support and resources.

The Group aims to foster an environment within the business where male colleagues feel comfortable to talk openly on issues which can be difficult, and to help break down the stigmas that can sometimes be associated with this.

We build connections across the firm (in the long run hopefully with our clients too) by encouraging wider engagement from male colleagues on diversity, equity and inclusion, and wellbeing issues, and providing support on any related initiatives, all with the purpose of promoting 'working positively' (a key wellbeing objective).

### What have you been up to over the last year?

The Group meets to share updates on initiatives and discuss any key topics, issues or challenges and how we can address these. We focus on local activities across the offices and also get involved in some key events, including International Men's Day and Men's Health month (November), events associated with mental health and suicide, and any wellbeing topics that impact men in particular.

In November, we arranged a webinar with LawCare to promote the valuable work they provide, including supporting men's mental health. Our colleagues also shared their own experiences of providing and receiving LawCare Peer Support.

We marked World Suicide Day with a case study from a Group member, who is also a trained Mental Health First Aider, and his experience of using his training to help someone in crisis.

We updated the men's wellbeing resources on our intranet to provide guidance on some of the health concerns and conditions that men can experience, raise awareness and understanding of these, and provide signposts for support.

### What are your goals for the future?

We are currently speaking with Talk Club, a UK male mental health charity helping men to improve their mental fitness. This is with the aim of hopefully setting up our own 'talk and listen' group offering peer to peer support internally.

We will continue supporting local initiatives and building on the objectives of the Group.



**Nicholas Younger**  
Associate



**Ben Duxbury**  
Managing Associate



# MINDFUL BUSINESS CHARTER (MBC)

We are signatories to the Mindful Business Charter, a community of over 140 organisations committed to identifying unnecessary stress in our businesses to create better and healthier working environments for our people.

In the last year, we have started to explore how we can use our membership and the MBC framework to support a firm-wide project on identifying avoidable stress and unhelpful working practices at WBD.

We provide excellent wellbeing resources and support, and we have committed and engaged advocates around our business who champion these resources. However, more recently, we have started to shift our attention from tackling the symptoms of poor mental health and wellbeing, to addressing the causes of them.

We started a project with MBC in January 2024, asking our people 'What are the key sources of stress you experience in your day-to-day work and what ideas do you have for addressing those sources of stress?'. Feedback collection started in February 2024 and since then, we have had several really valuable meetings with our Employee Forum and Partner

and Support Director groups. Richard Martin (CEO of MBC) has joined all of the meetings and worked with us to create safe spaces for people to talk about the unnecessary causes of stress in the way we work, if we can talk about what the stressors are, we can do something about them. We have been so pleased with the way that our colleagues have worked with us on this project and have lots of feedback to work with.

The next phase of the project will involve us getting a working group together, to review the feedback and develop a firm-wide wellbeing action plan.

In 2024/25 we will start to implement the recommendations from this project on an incremental basis. We're confident that we can make positive changes to working practices that can improve wellbeing for all of our people, to support healthy high performance at WBD.



**Jane Freeman**  
HR Manager

A wellbeing get together in our Newcastle office following a wellbeing walk.



## RETHINK MENOPAUSE

A year on from launching our Menopause Champions, as part of World Menopause Day 2023 we were joined by Dr Sam Morgan, Menopause Specialist Doctor, who hosted a Rethink Menopause talk and Q&A on the perimenopause.

The session introduced the key definitions related to perimenopause and to the relevant hormones and their functions. Dr Morgan then explored the symptoms of perimenopause and symptom trackers, the long term health impacts of the perimenopause and, importantly, how to prepare for a doctor's appointment and why they may recommend the use of blood tests and contraception for those experiencing perimenopause.

**Nicola Cotton, Associate and Menopause Champion**, shared her thoughts on the session:

"This was a highly informative talk (and Q&A) by Dr Sam Morgan about the years leading up to the menopause in which hormonal changes and their potential effects on the body during perimenopause were discussed.

"Her detailed account will enable viewers to better understand how the perimenopause can affect women, whilst acknowledging that every woman's experience is different."

In addition to the session, in celebration of World Menopause Day, we heard some of our employee's own experiences of the perimenopause and the support available at the firm, including our incredible Menopause Champions.

Our Menopause Champions are there to act as a point of contact and somebody to talk to about the menopause, whether you are experiencing it yourself or looking for more information. Our Champions are doing a great job of promoting initiatives to support and deal with menopause in the workplace and at home and are working with managers and HR to ensure the right workplace adjustments are in place.



**Donna Hext**  
HR Manager



**Nicola Cotton**  
Associate



# GOVERNANCE

Working professionally and responsibly in our marketplace

## 2023/24 progress update

### Developing our firm:

- Continued to develop our internal audit programme. This is an integral part of our governance strategy and enables us to pro-actively identify assurances, risks and opportunities to improve – particularly focusing on: regulations, quality, compliance, service delivery/financial management and best practice.
- Carried out extensive scope 3 emissions for our supply chain on Financial Year (FY) 2023/24, to use to map against our baseline year (FY 2019/20).
- Hired a new Chief Strategy Officer, Sarah Felger, to help to drive the firm's progress.
- Transition of partner in our Restructuring and Insolvency team, Sally Dallow, to newly created role of Partner Lead for Responsible Business.
- Sam Dixon appointed Chief Innovation Officer (CINO), expanding on his previous role as Head of Innovation.
- During our annual Innovation Week our Disability Network and Innovation team collaborated to showcase an interview with Feargus MacDaeid, one of the founders of Definely, a new legal tech tool, bringing efficiency and quality control benefits to everyone, a solution to make document review easier. Definely was initially created to help those who are registered blind to review legal documents. Sam Dixon and Feargus discussed the benefits of inclusive design and Definely has since been launched at the firm and described by colleagues as "a game changer".
- Continued to further develop and enhance our threat monitoring capabilities.
- Our revamped IT intranet sites now have more content than ever including a section on cyber security.
- Continued to collaborate with the business on Genius Bytes with examples from the Disability Network, Health & Wellbeing group, Risk & Best Practice.
- We endeavour to make all IT Comms and IT Training materials accessible to all to ensure we are doing our bit as a Disability Confident Leader.
- Relationships between IT and the Firm have been strengthened further this year with more bespoke IT sessions, more feedback gathering and more working groups.
- Released our AI policy including our ethical principles for AI accompanied by the launch of our first generative AI tools including iWomble, a generative AI powered chatbot which answers colleagues' questions about our policies and procedures.
- Following our mobile phone refresh last year we produced guidance linked to digital wellbeing for members of staff using either a personal or a corporate device on how to turn off corporate app notifications outside of working hours via Focus / Work profiles on the device.

### Developing and supporting our people:

- October 2023 saw the launch of Pioneer, our career transition programme for newly qualified lawyers (NQs). Run over six months, the initiative is designed to equip our NQs with the tools and insights to successfully transition from trainee to solicitor and to enable them to shape their careers at the firm.
- Further evolved our new partner programme, bringing fresh perspectives and approaches to our leadership development training. Future focused, the programme explores what it takes to build a sustainable practice and thrive as a business leader.
- Building a diverse and inclusive working community is a core component of our strategy and our DEI networks are a key part of that. This year our DEI network leads took part in a programme of events designed to help them engage our communities and our clients and be a true catalyst for change.
- Launched a new bespoke programme for our Executive Services Team. This was designed in collaboration with our secretarial team leads and recognises the contribution that those in these roles make to the success of our firm. We brought together internal and external experts to create sessions that build capability, engagement and performance across all facets of the role, promoting a mindset of continuous improvement.
- Continued to support our people through training programmes such as STEP Diploma, CILEx CPQ, SQE and CLE programmes, and Accounting – ATT/CTA Tax Pathway.
- Ran a series of events through our Informed Counsel programme including Disability Inclusion in the Legal Profession and Burnout.

The British Diversity Awards 2024, where our WBD Disability Network was shortlisted for Ability Network of the Year.

## Certifications:

- Successfully transitioned all sites to the new 2022 version of the ISO 27001 standard. We achieved this in 2023 – well in advance of the 2025 transition deadline.
- Cyber Essentials Plus re-certification (a key component in our cyber-attack prevention and defence strategy).
- ISO 9001 achieved ongoing certification (quality management – evidence of our commitment to ensuring strong customer focus, quality management and continual improvement).
- ISO 14001 re-certification (environmental management – evidence of an effective environmental management system in place).

## Governance in the community:

- Nigel Emmerson, partner at WBD, head of the firm's Newcastle office and national head of its Living sector, has been elected as Newcastle upon Tyne Law Society's new President following its annual general meeting in March 2024.
- WBD launched a new network, Next Gen, aimed at in-house support staff, surveyors, property

managers and other property professionals working in the retail sector who are at the start of their careers, currently studying or transitioning to a new role. This network is designed to bring down barriers to progression within the industry and provide a platform for peer-to-peer learning, knowledge sharing and networking.

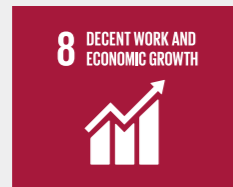
## Awards this year:

- Achieved EcoVadis Gold Medal, improving our score compared to FY 2022/23.
- Shortlisted at the People In Law Awards 2024 for the 'Best Environmental, Social and Governance Initiative'.
- Shortlisted for eight awards at the inaugural The Legal 500 ESG UK Awards, including:
  - ESG Firm of the Year.
  - Best Law Firm Advisory Team: Clean Energy.
  - Charlotte von Sicard – ESG Rising Star (won – announced in May 2024).
- Shortlisted in the 2024 Targetjobs National Graduate Recruitment Awards for the Sustainability In Early Talent Recruitment Award.
- Shortlisted for ESG at The Legal 500 Northern Powerhouse Awards 2024.
- Shortlisted for Best ESG campaign at the Yorkshire Legal Awards 2023.

## Members contributing to governance:

- Risk and Best Practice team.
- Learning & Development team.
- IT team.
- Knowledge & Legal Training team.
- Responsible Business Governance Group.
- Responsible Business Working Group.
- WBD Board Members.

## UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS



“It’s important for our people and our clients that we create a learning culture that empowers everyone to contribute to our business and reach their full potential.”

Sarah Manning, Learning & Development Manager



## SUPPLIER WORKSHOP WITH PLANET MARK

Reducing our scope 3 carbon emissions is key for us to be able to achieve our goal of being net zero by 2030. We have been working with our supply chain to align our goals more closely with theirs and support them on their own sustainability journeys.

In September we hosted a Net Zero Supplier Seminar with sustainability experts Planet Mark, who support us with our carbon reporting and certification. The aim of the session was the help demystify net zero and to help us and our suppliers work together in pursuit of our collective transition to a net zero future.

We provided guidance and training on net zero and our reporting requirements, heard case studies from two suppliers on their own sustainability journeys, and also gave suppliers the opportunity to share their experiences and challenges and what support they are looking for from us.

The discussions and feedback from this session will help shape our future engagement with our suppliers, and has been used in the creation of our new supplier code of conduct and supplier onboarding questionnaire, both of which take sustainability and our responsible business goals into account better, and will be issued to suppliers in FY 2024/25.

Amelie, Head of Engagement at Planet Mark, said:

“The journey to net zero inevitably involves a comprehensive measurement journey that takes businesses beyond their own operations and deep into the value chain. Womble Bond Dickinson have embraced this challenge wholeheartedly and have taken important steps to engage directly with their suppliers. Planet Mark was delighted to support the first of WBD’s Supplier Seminars in 2023 and we were impressed by the level of engagement, innovation, and collaboration in the room. By maintaining this approach to supplier engagement and innovation, we are confident that WBD will be successful in maintaining buy-in and collaboration with their suppliers and will continue to make progress towards their net zero targets.”



**Mat Swift**  
Environment, Health  
& Safety Manager



**Charmian Leatt**  
Managing Associate  
General Counsel



**Jenny Hill**  
Managing Associate  
General Counsel

# INTRODUCING OUR CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER, SAM DIXON

I'm delighted to share with you some of the highlights of our innovation journey in the past year and our vision for the future.

As the firm's first ever Chief Innovation Officer (CINO), I have the privilege of leading our innovation strategy and fostering a culture of innovation across the firm. We have taken great strides in the past year, putting in place the foundations to make the most of generative AI and migrating the 90 million documents in our document management system to the cloud—all with a view to enhancing our service delivery, efficiency, and client experience.

Some of the examples of our innovation in action are:

- The release of our AI policy, which sets out our approach for using AI in our work, together with our ethical principles for approaching this novel and rapidly evolving technology.
- The firmwide launch of our first generative AI solutions, Bing Copilot and iWomble. Bing Copilot is essentially a secure version of ChatGPT which can supplement its responses with up to date information from web searches. iWomble is a chatbot that answers questions about our policies and procedures.

- The launch of our new CRM, which helps us to manage our client relationships, track our business development activities, and generate insights from our data.
- The launch of Definely, our new document review tool, which uses rules-based AI to improve the efficiency and consistency of document review.

Our goals for the future are to continue to innovate and leverage the power of AI to create more value for our clients and our people.

We plan to make more generative AI tools available to the firm, expanding our current offering to include tools that meet colleagues in the applications they already use all the time and to include legal specific tools. We will also continue to take steps to foster a culture of innovation that encourages everyone to share their ideas, experiment, learn, and collaborate. Together, we can make innovation happen.



**Sam Dixon**  
Chief Innovation Officer  
and Partner





## ADVISING OUR CLIENTS ON ESG LAWS, REGULATIONS AND BEST PRACTICE IN THE UK

In November 2023, WBD produced a new paper aiming to educate businesses on the latest Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) laws, regulations and statements of best practice applicable in the UK.

Entitled ‘ESG: Why the UK is having to measure up’, the paper is a detailed guide to the UK legal landscape, highlighting those ESG measures which have been implemented into law and directing readers to key considerations when implementing their own ESG strategies.

The guide, produced by partner Rebecca Ferguson in WBD’s London corporate team, focuses on key recent changes to legislation across the three ESG pillars and also considers what’s likely to be in store for UK businesses through pending legislative reviews, consultations and parliamentary plans.

Examples of such changes include the new Energy Act 2023, new rights for workers to request predictable working patterns and renewed guidance from the Financial Reporting Council on how to utilise ESG. Taking advantage of the firm’s international network, the 10-page report also features recent legal developments relating to ESG in the EU and US.

Rebecca Ferguson, London corporate partner at WBD, said:

“Whilst initially being a means to showcase UK business performance and accountability, ESG has morphed into must-have policy for responsible businesses in the UK as a result of an ever-increasing platform of legislation, rules and statements of best practice. A strong knowledge of the legal background to ESG is vital to ensuring this can be achieved lawfully and effectively.”

“At WBD we are committed to helping our clients understand where they stand in the complicated and fast moving legal landscape of ESG. We are equally committed to maintaining our own high standards of business ethics and environmental responsibility.”

The full report can be read [here](#).



**Rebecca Ferguson**  
Partner

# RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

Please note: FY 2023/24 was an 11-month year due to changes in the firm's reporting period.



## Environmental

### Number of Environmental Reps

22/23 - 25 / 23/24 - 30

### Electricity use

22/23 - 1,848,066.5 kwh / 23/24 - 1,581,653.6 kwh

### Gas use

22/23 - 1,759,783.3 kwh / 23/24 - 1,081,751.2 kwh

### Business travel emissions

22/23 - 198.1 tCO<sub>2</sub>e / 23/24 - 250.6 tCO<sub>2</sub>e

### Total scope 1

22/23 - 331.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e / 23/24 - 209.8 tCO<sub>2</sub>e

### Total scope 2

22/23 - 319.4 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (location)

23/24 - 301.7 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (location)

22/23 - 231.4 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (market)

23/24 - 177 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (market)

### Measured scope 3

22/23 - 241.2 tCO<sub>2</sub>e / 23/24 - 289.9 tCO<sub>2</sub>e

### Emissions associated with paper use

22/23 - 11.7 tCO<sub>2</sub>e / 23/24 - 10.5 tCO<sub>2</sub>e

### Water usage

22/23 - 9,439.9 m<sup>3</sup> / 23/24 - 8,458.5 m<sup>3</sup>

### Emissions associated with water usage

22/23 - 4 tCO<sub>2</sub>e / 23/24 - 3.2 tCO<sub>2</sub>e

We're advancing our emissions reporting by adding new categories, like hotel and waste emissions, to our scope 3 data. This increases our reported emissions but is crucial for transparency and comprehensive impact assessment, aiding in our improvement efforts.



## Community Engagement

### Volunteering hours

22/23 - 1,119 hours / 23/24 - 1,310 hours

### Pro bono hours

22/23 - 601.8 hours / 23/24 - 968.4 hours

### Total given to charity

22/23 - £78,212 / 23/24 - £129,532

### Number of colleagues in community engagement committees

22/23 - 122 members / 23/24 - 130 members



## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

### Female partners

22/23 - 30% / 23/24 - 33%

### Female partner promotions

22/23 - 73% / 23/24 - 50%

### Partners who are LGBTQ+

22/23 - 3.4% / 23/24 - 3.5%

### Partners from ethnic minority backgrounds

22/23 - 4.7% / 23/24 - 3.5%

### Partners who are disabled

22/23 - 6.6% / 23/24 - 7.1%

### Partners who went to state schools

22/23 - 50% / 23/24 - 56%

### Female Senior Leaders (Board and Support Directors)

22/23 - 29% / 23/24 - 36%

### Stonewall Employer Index ranking

22/23 - 56th / 23/24 - 62nd

### Disability Confident level

22/23 - Disability Confident Employer /

23/24 - Disability Confident Leader

### Number of members of DEI networks

22/23 - 285 / 23/24 - 357\*

\*Family Network has moved from a wellbeing network to a DEI network hence the change in numbers.



## Social Mobility

### Social Mobility Employer Index ranking

22/23 - 41st / 23/24 - 11th

### Total number of employees doing an apprenticeship

22/23 - 49 / 23/24 - 53

### Newly hired apprentices in the year

22/23 - 11 / 23/24 - 6

### Existing employees enrolled on an apprenticeship in the year

22/23 - 2 / 23/24 - 2

### Percentage of non-Russell group candidates for graduate recruitment

22/23 - 50% / 23/24 - 62%

### Number of work experience students supported with office-based work placement

22/23 - 46 / 23/24 - 27

### Number of students attending virtual work experience

22/23 - 26 / 23/24 - 265

### Number of workshops and events attended such as career fairs, career talks and mock interviews

22/23 - 20 / 23/24 - 38



## Wellbeing

### Percentage of colleagues taking a wellbeing day

22/23 - 59% / 23/24 - 58%

### Investors in Wellbeing Standard Award

22/23 - Silver / 23/24 - Silver

### Members of wellbeing groups

22/23 - 188 / 23/24 - 148\*

### Absence through sickness as a percentage of working hours

22/23 - 1.5% / 23/24 - 2%

\*Family Network has moved from a wellbeing network to a DEI network hence the change in numbers.



## Governance

### Headcount

22/23 - 1,206 / 23/24 - 1,181

### Investors in People Main Standard

22/23 - Gold / 23/24 - Gold

### EcoVadis Award

22/23 - Gold / 23/24 - Gold

### Average training hours per person

22/23 - 10.9 hours / 23/24 - 12.4 hours

### DEI training completed as a percentage of workforce

22/23 - 93% Unconscious Bias /

23/24 - 99% Active Bystander

### Number of lawyers recognised by Chambers UK

22/23 - 105 / 23/24 - 100

### Number of ISO standards achieved

22/23 - 3 / 23/24 - 3

### Turnover of our people

22/23 - 15.2% / 23/24 - 13.8%

### Suppliers paid within 60 days

22/23 - 89% / 23/24 - 91%

### Number of employee forum reps

22/23 - 35 / 23/24 - 37

### Key to date abbreviations:

22/23: Financial Year 2022/23

23/24: Financial Year 2023/24



# GOALS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

## PROGRESS AGAINST OUR 2022/23 GOALS

- Complete
- In progress
- Not progressing

### Environment

- Reduce our emissions by 12% from our baseline year in line with Planet Mark's recommended reduction.  
**Explanation:** In 2023/24, we achieved a 53.49% reduction in emissions compared to our baseline year for scopes 1, 2, and measured scope 3 emissions (business travel, paper procurement, water usage). We're progressing well towards our targets but must review and assess our extended scope 3 emissions to ensure alignment with our net zero goal.
- Run at least one supplier engagement workshop to encourage our supply chain to work with us collaboratively on our journey to net zero.
- Carry out a further extended scope 3 emissions measurement, including scope 3 categories such as waste, supply chain and commuting.

### Social: Community Engagement

- Launch a grant funding application process that aligns with our Responsible Business networks and campaigns.  
**Explanation:** We've reviewed our charitable giving process, identified gaps, and have started the initial stages of launching a new grant giving scheme.
- Grow our pro bono hours by 10%.
- Grow our volunteering hours by 9%.

### Social: Social Mobility

- Launch our "live" virtual work experience programme with schools in the region. This will take place over three days in the summer and sessions will be a mix of skills building and insight into roles within our business.
- Launch an early talent programme in memory of a colleague, focusing on providing support to those from ethnic minority and less socially mobile backgrounds.  
**Explanation:** We are continuing to scope this programme to launch it alongside our existing early talent candidate engagement initiatives.
- Create a social mobility network at the firm.  
**Explanation:** We are nearing the final stages of discussions for launching the new network. We aim to ensure the network's structure and objectives are well-defined to meet members' needs, therefore we're taking the time to consult thoroughly.

### Social: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

- Achieve Disability Confident Leader.
- Recruit two interns through 10,000 Able interns.
- Achieve Mansfield Certification aimed at increasing diversity in law firm recruitment and promotion practices.

### Social: Wellbeing

- Promote a positive, high performing culture across all teams by identifying and supporting healthy working practices. Our Wellbeing Champions will be reviewing the firms approach to delegation, meetings, emails and time off.  
**Explanation:** This goal aligns with our Mindful Business Charter project, so we have expanded our review of working practices and stressors. We're collaborating with the Mindful Business Charter, Employee Forum, Wellbeing Champions, Partners, and others to develop this further.
- Develop the Wellbeing Champions group to raise the profile of our wellbeing activity and resources.  
**Explanation:** Significant strides have been made in raising awareness. Our Wellbeing Champions have created presentation slides for team meetings, discussed activities and resources at team days, organised events like social wellbeing breakfasts and wellbeing walks, and promoted their roles and available resources. We will continue to prioritise this.
- Intend to achieve ISO 45001 (Health and Safety) certification in 2024 following third party assessment.  
**Explanation:** We're working with consultants towards a projected certification by February 2025. Achieving this certification will underscore WBD's dedication to the health, safety, and wellbeing of its workforce.

### Governance

- Refresh and update our Ethical Thinking training across the firm.
- Review our role definitions for key senior roles within the business.
- Publish a new Supplier Code of Conduct, expanding on and extending our existing Supplier Standards, and ask suppliers to commit to compliance with the new Code.

# OUR GOALS FOR 2024/25

Not started

### Environment

- Grow the number of environmental reps to 35.
- Reduce business travel emissions by 10%.
- Complete a monitor upgrade giving the entire firm access to dual 24" TFT monitors which are more energy efficient than previous models.

### Social: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

- Develop and approve the launch of our new integrated DEI Strategy.
- Roll out training across the firm to support our Hidden Disability Sunflower membership.
- Increase firmwide diversity data sharing rates via Count Me In.

### Social: Wellbeing

- Working with the Mindful Business Charter, develop and implement at least two new firm-wide initiatives (responding to employee and partner feedback), to improve working practices and reduce avoidable stress.
- Improve understanding of wellbeing resources and support across the business, increasing utilisation of wellbeing benefits. Grow the wellbeing days utilisation to 65% of the WBD workforce.
- Continue to work with Investors in People to improve our 'We Invest in Wellbeing' certification from Silver level. Working towards an interim review in Autumn 2024.

### Social: Community Engagement

- Launch a grant funding application process that aligns with WBD's Responsible Business networks and campaigns.
- Reach 1,500 volunteering hours for the year.
- Increase our payroll giving uptake to 3% of our workforce.

### Social: Social Mobility

- Launch an early talent programme in memory of a colleague, focusing on providing support to those from ethnic minority and less socially mobile backgrounds.
- Create a social mobility network at the firm.
- Report on our class pay gap.

### Governance

- Create and maintain a guide focused on risk, governance and best practice which covers how we deliver services, the way we run our business and how we consider the impact we have on everyone around us. This forms an essential part of our continued focus on ethics.
- Roll out our latest information security e-learning package – a key part of our information security defences is robust user education and awareness.
- Install a new digital based hearing loop in the London office to make it easier for guests, visitors and staff to connect in via their mobile phones and digital hearing aids.

# RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS ACCREDITATIONS

We are proud of the awards, accreditations and memberships we have to date, and these recognise our existing activity.

However we acknowledge that there is still more to be done, and we will continue to strive for meaningful change.





[womblebonddickinson.com](https://www.womblebonddickinson.com)

WBD-RBR-2024-001

© Copyright 2024 Womble Bond Dickinson (UK) LLP. All rights reserved. This communication is provided for general information only and does not constitute legal, financial, or other professional advice so should not be relied on for any purposes. You should consult a suitably qualified lawyer or other relevant professional on a specific problem or matter. Womble Bond Dickinson (UK) LLP is authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. "Womble Bond Dickinson", the "law firm" or the "firm" refers to the network of member firms of Womble Bond Dickinson (International) Limited consisting of Womble Bond Dickinson (UK) LLP and Womble Bond Dickinson (US) LLP. Each of Womble Bond Dickinson (UK) LLP and Womble Bond Dickinson (US) LLP is a separate legal entity operating as an independent law firm. Womble Bond Dickinson (International) Limited does not practise law. Please see <https://www.womblebonddickinson.com/uk/legal-notices> for further details.