



**PKF**  
Francis Clark

# Our environmental, social and governance (ESG) commitment: progress and goals



# Our approach to ESG

Our purpose is to enable our clients and people to succeed. Through this, we contribute to the overall prosperity and economic growth of our region. Our **values** underpin everything we do and guide our decision-making.



**Adaptable**



**Ambitious**



**Integrity**



**Respectful**



**Supportive**

As a firm, a key strategic priority for us is to make a positive impact, for our clients and for the communities in which we live and work. We aim to do this by better understanding and meeting our clients' needs, as well as focusing on the most important environmental, social and governance (ESG) matters identified by our stakeholders and striving to be a force for good.

ESG is a term used by organisations like us that take a more holistic view of their impact on the environment, the people who work for them and the local communities in which they operate. ESG criteria make the overall impact of a firm's activities more measurable, covering environmental factors, company culture and leadership, as well as issues like diversity, inclusion and board composition.

Our first step on our ESG journey has been to develop a plan for positive changes. To create this plan, we benchmarked ourselves against the criteria and framework used by B Lab to certify businesses – known as B Corporations, or B Corps – that meet high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability. We have identified and engaged with our key stakeholders, so we can align our priorities with what is important to them by conducting a comprehensive materiality assessment.

**The areas covered by our plan are shown on our ESG wheel.**





**This document summarises the progress we have made on our plan so far, and the areas where we have committed to invest and develop strategic improvements.**

# Environment

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The 'E' in ESG refers to the environmental factors that relate to the natural world. It assesses how the firm interacts with the environment and evaluates its business practices.

We are fortunate to be based in one of the most beautiful parts of the country. We want to do more to care for our precious natural environment, making a difference through our day-to-day activities and longer-term commitments.

## Our progress

### Manage, monitor, recycle and reduce

Since 2019/20, we have reduced our direct and indirect carbon emissions by 38%, with most reductions stemming from lower fuel consumption by vehicles. Since 2019, we have decreased business travel, encouraged car sharing and the use of online meetings when an in-person meeting is not necessary. We embrace hybrid working, enabling our partners and colleagues to work from home – taking into consideration the needs of our clients and our business – further reducing our carbon emissions.

We have invested in facilities management and introduced effective systems, resources and processes to deliver notable improvements in the way we manage our environmental impact across our office estate.

Working with a resource management consultancy, we have created an energy management system, so we can monitor our environmental impact. We are setting goals to reduce this impact.

# 38%

**reduction in  
our carbon  
emissions  
since 2019/20**

We have moved to renewable energy suppliers, installed solar panels at our Torquay office and begun rolling out smart power sockets across our offices. This technology is helping to reduce our energy usage significantly by switching off the power supply to devices when they are not being used.

We have introduced an electric vehicle (EV) salary sacrifice scheme to encourage colleagues' adoption of electric vehicles and facilitate colleague car sharing arrangements. We also promote cycling to work through a salary sacrifice scheme and on-site changing facilities.

Moving to a centralised waste management supplier has given us consistent waste and recycling data, which will enable us to track and drive further improvements.

We have established Green Teams in all our offices to support our firmwide objectives, raise awareness of environmental issues and implement initiatives at a local level.





"I have recently taken on the role of head of our Green Teams – I'm one of the sponsoring partners for our ESG project team, so it seemed like a natural fit. There are 47 Green Team members across our nine offices. A Green Team lead from each office joins a Teams meeting every four to six weeks to discuss and share ideas. These representatives then share their thoughts with their own offices and put in place initiatives appropriate for the local environment and community.

"I'm inspired by the enthusiasm, commitment and engagement of our Green Teams to make a positive environmental impact. It's my hope that our activities and passion deliver a long-term tangible and measurable impact on our environment – and we provide a transferrable knowledge base that colleagues can use at home."

**Dawn Peattie**

Partner and head of Green Teams

## Our goals

With these foundations in place, we are focused on monitoring our environmental impact and making improvements in specific areas. Our target is to reach carbon net zero by 2035. To achieve this, we are prioritising expanding sustainable commuting incentives, EV adoption programmes and improved cycling infrastructure.

We are strengthening supplier engagement and procurement policies to encourage emissions reductions in our supply chain.

We are investing in operational efficiencies and improving reporting accuracy, ensuring emissions reductions are measured and accurate.

We are also developing a transparent, science-based framework for addressing residual emissions within our supply chain and, if necessary, high-integrity offsetting.



# Social

The 'S' in ESG centres on relationships and refers to the social factors that affect the lives of others. It addresses how a firm manages its relationships with colleagues, clients, suppliers and the communities in which it operates.

We respect our colleagues, value their diversity and care about their wellbeing and career development. Without them, we would not be the successful firm we are today. As a significant regional employer, we want to have a positive impact on the communities where we live and work. We want to work with like-minded clients and suppliers whose organisational values are aligned to ours.

## Our progress

### Colleague engagement, wellbeing and development

We are proud to have been certified as a Great Place to Work every year since 2022, as a direct result of feedback from our people. We are also ranked among the UK's Best Workplaces for Wellbeing; Best Workplaces for Women; Best Workplaces for Development and Best Workplaces in Consulting & Professional Services.

We listen to colleagues' views on what we are doing well and how we can improve through **engagement** surveys four times a year and take action based on their feedback. Our colleagues express their views and ask questions (anonymously or in person) directly to our CEO and COO at our biannual roadshows.

Colleagues tell us that they particularly enjoy our inclusive culture, our career development opportunities and the flexibility to balance work and home life they enjoy thanks to our flexible working and hybrid working policies.

**Great  
Place  
To  
Work®**

**Certified**

NOV 2024-NOV 2025

UK

## Great Place to Work

Workplace culture experts Great Place to Work conduct an independent annual survey of our colleagues. In the latest survey:

- 87%** of those who responded said PKF Francis Clark is a great place to work, compared to 54% of employees at a typical UK-based company.
- 91%** said they are offered training or development to further themselves professionally.
- 87%** said they feel good about the ways in which we contribute to the community.
- 93%** said management is honest and ethical in its business practices.

**We have a history of investing in our colleagues' health and wellbeing.** Our Wellbeing Wednesdays programme shares tips and resources to give colleagues the life skills to improve their physical, mental and financial wellbeing. This includes regular live webinars with a sports, exercise and performance psychologist, pensions experts and others.

Having signed the Menopause Workplace Pledge, we have introduced a number of initiatives to support colleagues who are approaching and going through this life stage. This has evolved into an informal support group with regular meetings, a dedicated Teams channel and drop-in 'menopause café' discussion groups. We have also delivered a training session for line managers to raise awareness of how they can support colleagues who are going through the menopause.

We also have a network of health and wellbeing champions and mental health first aiders. We ensure that any colleagues who are experiencing physical or mental difficulties are cared for and supported appropriately.

All colleagues now benefit from a health cash plan that provides not just cashback on day-to-day health treatments but support via a range of digital tools to protect colleagues' and their families' ongoing health, both at home and at work.

**Learning and development** is a big part of our culture. We are recognised nationally as a Top 100 apprenticeship employer, with over 240 colleagues advancing their professional development through fully funded qualifications during work time. We have introduced a paid internship programme for university placement students, ensuring that they have two-way feedback throughout their time with us.

**Over**  
**240**  
**colleagues**  
**studying for**  
**fully funded**  
**professional**  
**qualifications**

We have written a new continuous professional development policy and introduced a range of technical and non-technical learning programmes to give our colleagues the knowledge, experience and behaviours needed to deliver outstanding client service and fulfil their career ambitions. We have embedded our ESG strategy and approach into our core learning programmes.

We have also developed our own suite of leadership programmes for managers at all levels. In 2024, over 150 managers completed the programmes, equipping them to effectively communicate and manage a range of ESG matters with their teams.

We have improved our annual performance development review process to support colleagues to achieve their full potential. This includes setting individual ESG objectives alongside performance goals, in line with the firm's strategy and regular feedback.

In addition, everyone is encouraged to have an annual career conversation with their manager to help identify their strengths and development areas, aligned to our competency framework and ESG expectations for all roles.



## Diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I)

As mentioned earlier, one of our core values is being respectful. This means treating everyone equitably and respecting everyone's ideas, contributions and individuality.

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) is important to us because of the value it brings, in enabling colleagues to be their authentic selves and understanding the needs of our clients and communities. We know our stakeholders care about this too because they have told us.

We monitor our recruitment demographic data and share the results of an anonymous internal survey. We include DE&I questions in our quarterly colleague survey.

We have completed a comprehensive review and updated our people policies and processes to ensure DE&I is factored into key decision-making and certain groups are not disproportionately impacted. This includes introducing new policies relating to learning and emotional disabilities, including neurodiversity, and breast-feeding and expressing milk.

We offer training on a range of DE&I topics, and we have introduced mandatory training to help ensure a safe working environment free from bullying and harassment. We have launched a series of internal videos to nurture a sense of belonging and raise awareness of diversity and inclusivity.

We have optimised our recruitment processes to ensure that our advertising is inclusive and our assessment is objective, taking steps to remove the potential for unconscious bias in assessing applications for our early careers opportunities.

## Communities

We are keen to make a positive impact on the communities we live and work in, aligned to our ESG priorities.

Given the importance of wellbeing, we donate to the independent Francis Clark Charitable Foundation, which aims to alleviate financial hardship by aiding current or past partners, colleagues and their dependents.

Our offices support local charities and good causes, financially or by providing our services pro bono, including promoting physical health through our sponsorship of local sports teams. Each year, our teams choose local charities to support through a variety of fundraising events.

Last year, colleagues completed more than 2,500 hours of volunteering for good causes in our communities. In addition, our partners and colleagues perform a variety of roles supporting not-for-profit organisations on a voluntary basis.

We have sponsored and funded accommodation for three families fleeing the war in Ukraine to come to the UK.

Recognising career development as a priority, we engage with local schools, colleagues and universities to raise awareness of the accountancy profession and our opportunities as a Top 100 apprenticeship employer. We were one of the first firms to pilot the accountancy T-Levels as an alternative vocational route, and three of those students have gone on to join us as full-time trainees. We have become a Cornerstone Employer, working with other local employers to target disadvantage, promote pathways, upskill and inform educators, parents and carers and drive better outcomes for young people.

### Support for Ukrainian refugees

Following the outbreak of war in Ukraine, we established a working group to sponsor three refugee families to come to the UK. This involved working with two charities supporting children and adults with disabilities. We rented and furnished three homes in Devon that were suitable for people with disabilities. Colleagues supported the Ukrainian families to settle in and adjust to life in the UK, including help with IT and transport, setting up bank accounts, collating and translating useful information, accessing schools and medical services and exploring the local area.

More than  
**2,500**

hours of  
volunteering  
for good  
causes in  
2024



## Clients and suppliers

As mentioned earlier, one of our strategic objectives is to focus on the most important ESG matters identified by our stakeholders and be a force for good. We have identified and engaged with our key stakeholders, including those who have historically been under-represented, so we can align our priorities with what is important to them.

Our client take-on process ensures we only act for organisations that share our values and ESG principles.

We have grown our services to non-for-profit organisations and have joined the Crescent Purchasing Consortium, a charity that helps educational institutions procure products and services.

As client care is of paramount importance to us, we have introduced a client satisfaction survey, which has given us invaluable feedback and is being rolled out across all service lines.

An ethical marketing policy has been created to ensure our marketing activity adheres to the highest ethical standards. We have also introduced an accessibility policy, so that all our communication is clear and inclusive for everyone.

We have hosted a variety of events and webinars on topics that are important to our clients, including raising awareness of ESG and organisations that have successfully become B Corps.

We have introduced an ethical supplier and responsible purchasing policy, to ensure we work with partners who share our values.

## Our goals

We plan to continue regular engagement with our key stakeholders, including through structured client feedback programmes, client service charters, independent client service reviews and annually asking them about their ESG priorities.

We are creating new learning programmes focused on developing new and existing client relationships.

We are focused on understanding our demographics and will continue to raise colleagues' awareness of DE&I.

We are piloting a three-day work insight programme for Year 10 school students, to be rolled out across our offices to promote understanding of the professional world among local young people.

We will focus our efforts to increase the impact of our volunteering and charitable activities, including through local partnerships.

# Governance

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The 'G' in ESG refers to the governance factors of decision-making, whereby changes are being made to help create a more inclusive, considered firm, whether this is through ethical considerations being a key part of board discussions, diversity standards, firm culture or the sustainability of our day-to-day operations.

We are a substantial employer in the region, and we want to continue to attract and retain the very best talent. We want to understand more about our current and future colleagues, and ensure they feel a sense of belonging and being supported. We aspire to increase diversity in its widest sense within our senior management teams and be more transparent in our decision-making.

## Our progress

### Ethics

ESG considerations guide our decision-making, as we seek to balance people and profits, and take action on what matters most to our people, clients and communities.

This approach starts at the top. Our partnership agreement has been updated to include a specific commitment to balance profit with planet, while job descriptions, performance reviews and rewards for our senior leaders are linked to ESG responsibilities, objectives and targets.

We have reviewed and updated our vision, purpose, vision and values to reflect our ESG ambitions.

ESG is a core theme running through our firm's strategy, while ESG implications are considered before every board-level decision. Our board also regularly reviews progress on our ESG plan.

We operate to the highest ethical and professional standards, regularly training colleagues on our policies and procedures and continually monitoring compliance.



## Transparency

In terms of gender representation, key senior leadership roles are undertaken by women, including our senior partner and the chair of our board and members committee. Currently, a third of our board members are women. In addition to annual statutory reporting, we have conducted a thorough review of our gender pay gap data.

We communicate regularly with colleagues, including via biannual roadshows and monthly colleague update calls. Via these and other channels, we share information about the firm's financial performance and our ESG journey. We take care to ensure that everyone, including our non-accountant colleagues, understands our key metrics and performance.

Recognising that pay is one of the key drivers of employee engagement and satisfaction, we have implemented transparent, fair reward processes. As part of this, we have published a reward handbook and share our pay scales with colleagues during their annual one-to-one pay review discussions.

We have widened our whistleblowing policy to include internal and external stakeholders and introduced an anonymous reporting procedure to ensure that any concerns are reported, monitored and handled appropriately.

## Our goals

We aim to raise awareness of inclusivity and understanding of our demographics.

We will keep governance at the heart of our decision-making to ensure our ESG commitments and resulting changes are embraced and embedded into our culture. Therefore, the commitments will be reviewed annually and updated accordingly, acknowledging best practice across B Corp accredited companies and organisations, as well as our own experiences.

## Valuing diverse perspectives

We are proud of the progress we have made so far, but we know we're on a journey and there is more progress to make.

This updated ESG commitment statement was written and published in February 2025. We have made every effort to be inclusive and take the views of stakeholders into account in considering our approach to ESG. We welcome diverse perspectives and recognise that others with different experiences and backgrounds may be able to help us identify areas we have missed.

If you would like to contribute to our evolving thinking on these big issues, please contact:

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