

# IMPACT REPORT 2024

*G F*

*SMITH*

Certified



Corporation

**RK BURT**

# WELCOME TO OUR IMPACT REPORT!

This is our first such report having been certified as a B Corp in 2023.

In it, we aim to give a sense of who we are and what we stand for. We also intend to provide some insight into the progress we have made towards our social and environmental goals.

We see it as a companion to our People, Planet, Paper strategy which was launched in 2022 and a way of demonstrating how we live our values in practice.

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# GF SMITH & RK BURT HERITAGE

Obsessed with the beauty and possibility of paper, GF Smith is the UK's largest specialist paper company, and the dedicated supplier of creative papers to the fine art and creative industries. The company was founded in London in 1885 by globe-trotting stationery salesman George Frederick Smith. Over the following century, George's paper merchants built a reputation for quality and service, and became renowned as passionate pioneers of the paper industry, making and curating the world's finest and most distinctive papers and driving innovation across the sector.

At GF Smith, we bring creativity to life. Working with creative brands and individuals across the world, we specialise in pushing the possibilities of one of the most important raw materials of creative expression, paper.

RK Burt & Co. have been supplying the paper trade for more than 130 years, established in 1892 our first customers included The Bank of England and Lloyds of London. Many of the paper mills who appear in the original 1892

purchase ledger continue to supply us to this day. As family run business for many years,

RK Burt & Co. work with printers, publishers, retailers, film studios and artists who have continued to shape the UK creative industry. RK Burt & Co. supply paper from 27 different producers from across the world, including Nepal, Japan, France, Italy and Germany, as well as sourcing many of our papers in the UK; making us the leading London based importer and wholesale distributor of Traditional Fine Art and Digital Inkjet Papers.

In 2019, RK Burt & Co. was acquired by GF Smith, marking the beginning of a strong and prosperous relationship, with the aim of both companies reaching and satisfying a larger audience while solidifying their positions in their respective markets.

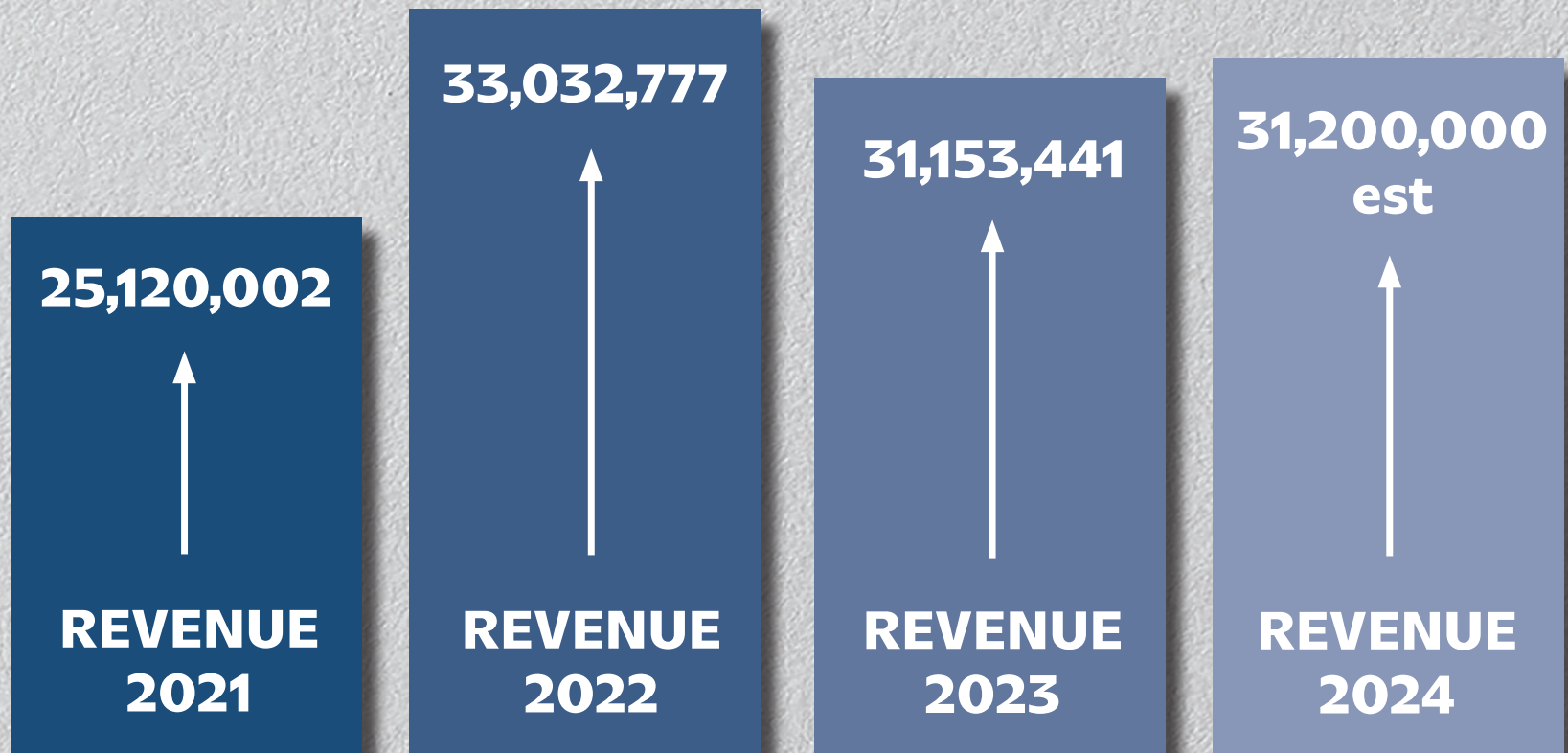
**PAPERS**  
↓  
**OVER 10,000**

**RANGES**  
↓  
**OVER 40**

**COLOURS**  
↓  
**OVER 140  
SHADES**

**COUNTRIES**  
↓  
**OVER 40**

**GF SMITH  
IN  
NUMBERS**



# OUR VALUES

We are determined that our values are not just nice words on the wall – they guide the way we operate day to day. Therefore, in 2021, prior to the launch of our People, Planet, Paper strategy, we rewrote our values with the help of our entire workforce, who contributed through ‘Have your say’ workshops.



## ONWARD

We are a proud, independent, distinctive business that never stops thinking. We were born in Hull but have a global perspective. People are our foundation; we love what we do and warmly welcome everyone on our journey.

## HUMAN

We stand for doing our best; being true to our word and treating others with respect. We stand for delighting our customers and each other; for bringing possibilities to life; for always asking ‘what more could I do?’ and for having fun while we do it.

## BOLD

We are not perfect, but we are working hard to become a world class business. One with a growth mindset, which continually improves and where everyone is able to reach their potential and be fully themselves. A successful, sustainable business for good, supporting and building our communities for future generations.



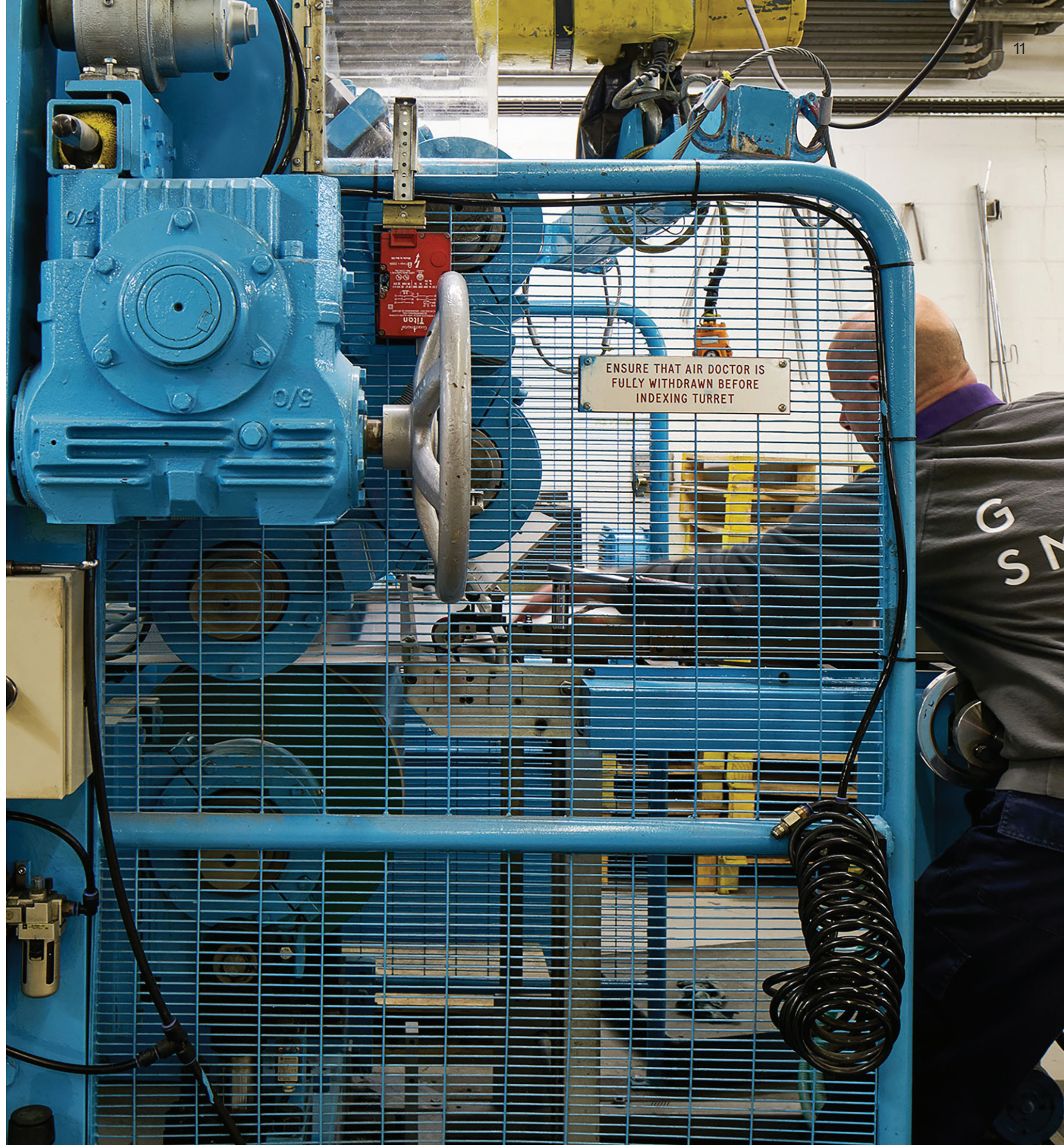
# OUR SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL STORY

We are proud of our long history of environmental awareness and 'doing the right thing', for example, the solar panels on our factory were the biggest single installation of its kind in East Yorkshire when they were installed in 2015.

However, we always challenge ourselves to do better and so...

In 2021/2022 we launched our People, Planet, Paper strategy. In it we set out key social and environmental targets including:

- Demonstrate our ongoing commitment to being a business for good through achieving B Corp status
- Ensure our people initiatives are driven by our people themselves by launching People Group
- Establish meaningful ways to inform and listen to our people through launching monthly scorecard briefs and a weekly engagement survey: Friday Pulse
- Reinforce our carbon reduction strategy by taking active steps towards becoming a carbon free site by 2027
- Challenge ourselves to have plastic free production by 2025.





**PEOPLE**

# THE BOARD AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



**Gareth Sheekey**  
Managing Director



**Charlotte Couchman**  
Commercial  
Development Director



**Margaret Sweeney**  
Sales & Business  
Development Director



**Ben Watkinson**  
Global Brand  
Director



**Charlotte Diaz**  
Director of  
HR



**Abbie Ross**  
Director of Product  
Development



**Gareth Powell**  
Company Secretary



**Richard Mottram**  
Director of  
Operations



**Simon Dennison**  
Director of  
Commercial Sales



**Lubos Bisto**  
Director of  
International Sales



**Stuart Beet**  
Director of  
Business Systems



**Sue Wilson**  
Director of  
Global Packaging

# OUR TEAM

GF Smith people are some of the most genuine and wholehearted you could find, visitors are consistently blown away by the warm welcome they receive.

Here are the stories of just a few of the people who make GF Smith and RK Burt such a special place.



## Charlie Downham

Role: Digital Fine Art Lead at RK Burt & Co.

Length of Service: 2.5 years

My story at GF Smith: I discovered GF Smith through being a customer after many years working in the print industry. On a personal level, I also used to letterpress wedding invitations for friends and the Extract range was always my go-to paper. In 2022 I joined the team as an Account Manager on the inkjet side and then grew into my current role of Digital Fine Art Lead.

Best thing about working here: The people and the creatives I get to work with.

Frustration/anything you would change: I am always immensely curious to see how our papers are used but sometimes we don't have that privilege!

Favourite product: Awagami Unryu - it's just so sexy.

Something not a lot of people know about you: I am rather obsessed with languages, specifically with becoming fluent in French. I've been taking lessons for years but I'm still quite a way off!



## Tom Hodgson

Role: Management Accountant

Length of service: 6 years, I started in June 2018

My story at GF Smith: I started as an assistant accountant in the finance team enabling me to gain a solid understanding of the finance team and how things are done here at GF Smith, during my time here I've helped the team to streamline and modernise many of our processes improving efficiency and accuracy.

Best thing about working here: the people, coming to work surrounded by a great bunch of people who you can have both productive and professional conversations with and also a good chat!

Frustration/anything you would change: as a business that's been operating for over 100 years, sometimes it felt a little difficult to suggest or implement changes, albeit, 2025 will radically buck that trend with lots of exciting things already on the calendar.

Favourite GF Smith colour or product: my new favourite product, is the Colorplan Vinyl which I was kindly gifted this week, hearing about all the work that went into each piece and then getting to see each one and learn a little bit more was great. The opportunity to keep one is fantastic and I'm really grateful.

Something not a lot of people know: My dream job is Accountant at Disney!



## Steve Dixon

Role: I'm one of 3 Lead Warehouse Operatives, we run despatch, exports and RKB.

Length of service: I've worked for Smiths for 24 years.

My story at GF Smith: I started as agency working in despatch and after 3 years moved into the warehouse, first driving a fork truck and the VNAs. I've seen us move from writing on stock cards and having to remember where stock is to us using scanners to pick stock... a lot has changed.

Best thing about working here: It's a great place to work, everyone is very supportive and friendly. Some times people take advantage of how supportive Smiths can be.

Favourite GF Smith colour or product: the swatches are always fun to look through, I've seen a fair few new swatches.

Something not a lot of people know: I started street art during Covid lockdown in 2020, I paint on legal walls found for us by Bankside Gallery. I've done a fair few commissions and I've done live painting at music festivals. My instagram is @sdart\_poi





## Chris O'Loughlin

Role: I'm a Poolworker which means that I work in production making things like handmade envelopes.

Length of service: I celebrated 50 years' service in 2024. I am GF Smith's longest serving person.

My story at GF Smith: I started straight from school, and I've been here ever since!

Best thing about working here: Definitely the lifelong friends I've made.

Frustration/anything you would change: The computers.

Favourite G. Smith colour or product: My overall favourite colour is red but in Colorplan it's Marrs Green.

Hidden talent: That's a secret!



## James Thompson

Role: Maintenance and Facilities Operative

Length of service: 6 years

My story at GF Smith: I started as an apprentice in engineering operations following the completion of my A levels and opted to pursue an apprenticeship rather than university. I have now progressed onto a HNC in engineering which I am currently in my second and final year. Over the years, I have taken on more responsibilities and had the opportunity to work on a variety of projects and machinery. This experience has helped me grow both professionally and personally.

Best thing about working here: The best part of working at GF Smith is the constant opportunity to learn and work on something new every day. I appreciate being part of a supportive environment that encourages growth and progression in my career.

Frustrations: None to mention!

Favourite GF Smith colour or product: My favourite Colorplan shade is Tabriz Blue.

Fun fact: Not necessarily a fun fact but as for my hobbies, they include a lot of hiking/ climbing, paddle boarding, occasional camping and other outdoor activities.



## Raeanne Hasnip

Role: Senior Buyer

Length of service: 1 year & 8 months, but it feels longer, in a good way!

My story at GF Smith: I came in as an assistant buyer but was promoted this year. I'm still learning new things all the time about our products and the amazing things that can be done with paper!

Best thing about working here: It has to be the people, we spend so much time at work so having a team that work well together but also know how to have fun is really important. I also love seeing our paper being used for big names, like the paper Christmas trees in the Hermès London store.

Frustration/anything you would change: The temperature in the office, it's always cold!

Favourite GF Smith colour or product: I love the Peregrina Majestic range as it was one of the first products I saw when I was researching for my job.

Fun fact: I'd say my guilty pleasure is Jane McDonald, but a few people know that now. She's such a queen!!



## Arnita Sakne

Role: I am a Sample Room Assistant - we send sample of our papers to customers around the world

Length of service: 14 years

My story at GF Smith: I started in 2010 with agency working in the Sample Room then in 2011 I got a permanent job. I was very excited getting a permanent job here because I really enjoyed the job. There is always a challenge and I love that.

Best thing about working here: The team work in the Sample Room. Feeling like everyone looks after each other in the business is really nice and it makes working easier knowing everyone is there for each other.

Frustrations or anything you would change?: An early finish on a Friday would be nice.

Fun fact: I love gardening and floristry. Recently I made a few Christmas Wreaths for family members. I also like going on long walks in the countryside. Growing up in Latvia I loved going for walks and there would always see stags and lynx in the fields. I wouldn't be able to do that as comfortably now as there are also bears and my family been told how to be safe with the bears near their houses.

# FACTS & FIGURES

## 141

Employees

## 68

Female

## 73

Male

## 8

New employees in  
the last year

## AGE

Spanning from  
20 to 66

## LENGTH OF SERVICE

Spanning from a few  
months to over 50 years!

## PAYGAP

Women's mean pay is  
£4,297 higher  
than men's.





**WHAT OUR PEOPLE ARE SAYING...**

As our values say we are not perfect, but we are working hard to continually improve. One of the ways we do this is through listening to people and our weekly engagement survey Friday Pulse is key.

Answered anonymously, Friday Pulse helps us to measure and benchmark our culture, and is also a platform for direct comment, suggestions and a way to offer thank you's to colleagues.

Backed by robust research Friday Pulse is the link between happiness and productivity, we use Friday Pulse to highlight strengths and development areas for all our teams.

**67/100**



**AVERAGE HAPPINESS OF 2024**

**58%**



**AVERAGE RESPONSE RATE OF 2024**

**Hayley Crowther –**

Thank you (Rae) for handling a million stock questions this week and keeping smiling throughout!

**Michelle O'Loughlin –**

Thank you to all the staff who worked Saturday to complete Stocktake, much appreciated. Enjoy the rest of your weekend.

**Helen Rhodes –**

Thank you to everyone in ops who had a hand in helping the export team this month, we couldn't make it happen without you!

**Adam Williamson –**

Very positive trip up north visiting lots of customers! Looking forward to seeing the results!

**Gareth Powell –**

Thank you accounts team for your continued hard work and support, especially over the last couple of weeks. I am extremely grateful!



**OUR  
APPROACH**

## WHAT WE OFFER...

Throughout our more than 130 years, we have always considered ourselves a good business, led by our values and committed to treating our people, customers and suppliers with respect.

B Corp accreditation led us to formalise our approach in this area and we now have a full suite of governance policies and procedures ranging from whistleblowing to a code of business ethics, to a supplier code of conduct.

### Healthshield

A health cash plan provided to every employee to claim money back on everyday health costs from optical to dental costs, as well as providing access to both physical and mental health support networks.

### Calm

A meditation app provided to every employee to help them unwind from work and decrease levels of stress and anxiety.

### People Group

Our way to allow every employee to have a voice and help influence decisions within the business. From creating new starter boxes that help create a warm welcome for new employees, creating more interactive engagement processes to support employee suggestions to organising social events.

### Digital Training

Through our network of partners we provide Digital Skills workshops for those who want to learn new or additional skills.

### Workshops

From Andy's Mans Club to creative paper collage, we host a series of workshops across the business throughout the year.

### Scorecard Meetings

Held every month, across every department, team meetings are held to discuss business news and to ensure knowledge across the business is shared transparently.

### Month in Pictures

Our month in pictures allows every employee to share key work or life events across the business from the past month.

### Paper News

Our annual journal of stories, information and GF Smith news.

### Maternity & Paternity

We are proud to offer enhanced maternity & paternity policies.

### EV Charging

Access to our Electric Vehicle charging points at our main vehicle sites is available to every employee.

### Cycle to Work

Our cycle to work scheme has been in operation since 2013 during which time our people have purchased over 95 bicycles.



# COMMUNITY



# COMMUNITY TRUST

We established the GF Smith Charitable Trust in 2023 out of a strong sense of wanting to build on our proud tradition of doing the right thing.

We want to be a good neighbour in our local community and increase our impact as a force for good both in the region and the wider creative community.

For that reason, we set up the Charitable Trust with the express purpose of supporting good causes in the postcode area of HU2 around our Lockwood Street site in Hull and also those focussed on creative education.

The Trust receives a percentage of profits from the business each year.

We were delighted to make our first grant in October this year supporting CASE, located in HU2, which is a centre dedicated to supporting young people and adults with learning disabilities in Hull and the surrounding areas. They needed a solar powered generator to enable their trainees to maximise their time at the classroom on their allotment.

Mark Cook CEO at CASE told us;

'At CASE we are committed to improving the life choices of those with learning disabilities by providing high-quality training, support, and employment opportunities.

Our aim is to create an environment that fosters confidence and personal growth. We offer a wide range of educational, training, day care, and recreational activities for our service users, while also supporting their families and carers.

Our GROW horticulture programme has seen significant development in the past two years. We have focused on eco-friendly practices, integrating training within our on-site cabin to reduce our carbon footprint. This enables trainees and staff to remain on-site for longer, avoiding the need to return to the main building, which helps maintain lower CO2 emissions. The generator makes us self-sufficient while at the allotment site.

We will be able to for expand the number of training days. Additionally, the solar generator will allow our trainers to use the latest software that caters to the unique needs of individuals with learning disabilities.'

The future is bright for the trust as we continue to develop our community projects including working with our local Emmaus facility, the Rise Academy, and HARI – Hull Artist Residency Initiative.



# EMPLOYEE BENEFIT TRUST

Our Employee Benefit trust has been in existence since 1977. Its purpose is to support current and former employees in their time of need or hardship and is funded through a percentage of profits each year.

It does fun stuff too, providing a Christmas bonus to retired GF Smithers and a Christmas present (usually a voucher) to our current people.

# CREATIVE COMMUNITY

At GF Smith, we believe that investing in the education sector and empowering students is pivotal for driving sustainable development and nurturing the next generation of creative talent. Our commitment to these goals is reflected in our strategic initiatives and collaborations aimed at fostering creativity, innovation, and environmental stewardship among young learners.

We regularly engage with student communities through talks, seminars, and collaborative projects. These interactions not only provide students with insights into the paper industry and sustainable practices, but also allow us to gain valuable feedback and fresh perspectives that drive our innovation and improvement.

During the academic year of 23/24, we visited over 80 institutions (universities/art schools), speaking with more than 7000 students. We have supported countless final year projects, and even worked with graphic design students at Manchester School of Art as part of our Colorplan Vinyl project - a first-of-its-kind creative collaboration between paper, sound and design that has been showcased throughout the UK and in destinations around the world including New York and Munich!



## 80

Universities & Art Schools visited

## 7000

Students met us



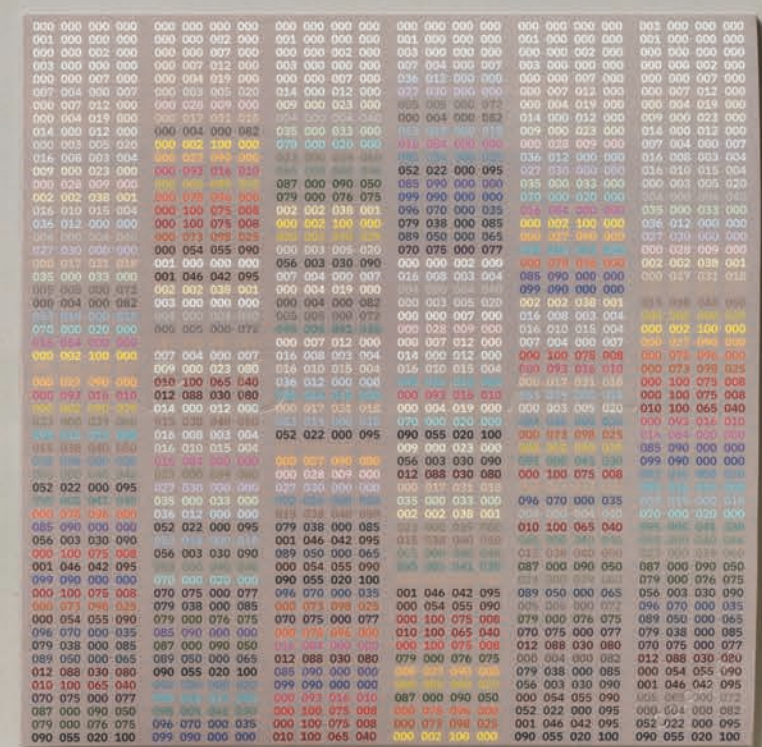
# CASE STUDIES

## COLORPLAN VINYL

As a brand, we have spent decades thinking about colour, what it can signify, the ideas it invokes, and how it makes us feel. To broaden our scope further, we teamed up with music and sound design studio father in the summer of 2023, setting them the unusual task of developing a soundscape inspired by the 55 colours of our Colorplan range. father created a distinct sound to reflect each of the 55 colours and used these sounds to compose pieces of music that now sit on a 12" vinyl album exploring the music of colour.

In January 2024, we turned to the new generation of creative talent currently enrolled in their 2nd and 3rd years at the BA (Hons) Graphic Design course at Manchester School of Art, challenging the students to turn their creativity towards the exploration of colour filtered through the lens of sound to create the cover art for this landmark piece.

Over the course of 4 weeks the project transformed from 200+ submissions, to a shortlist of 30, culminating in a final selection of 10 designs by ten inspired and ambitious young creatives. These 10 designs went into production and have been distributed with the worldwide creative community.



# SUPPORTING LEARNING OUTSIDE OF UNIVERSITIES

We are very aware that for many, university is an unattainable prospect. Over the last year we have spent time and resources looking at ways we can reach people from other demographics, cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds, such as:

## YOUNG V&A

Forging partnerships with institutions such as the Young V&A has allowed us to participate in outreach workshops for underprivileged children aged 11–15.

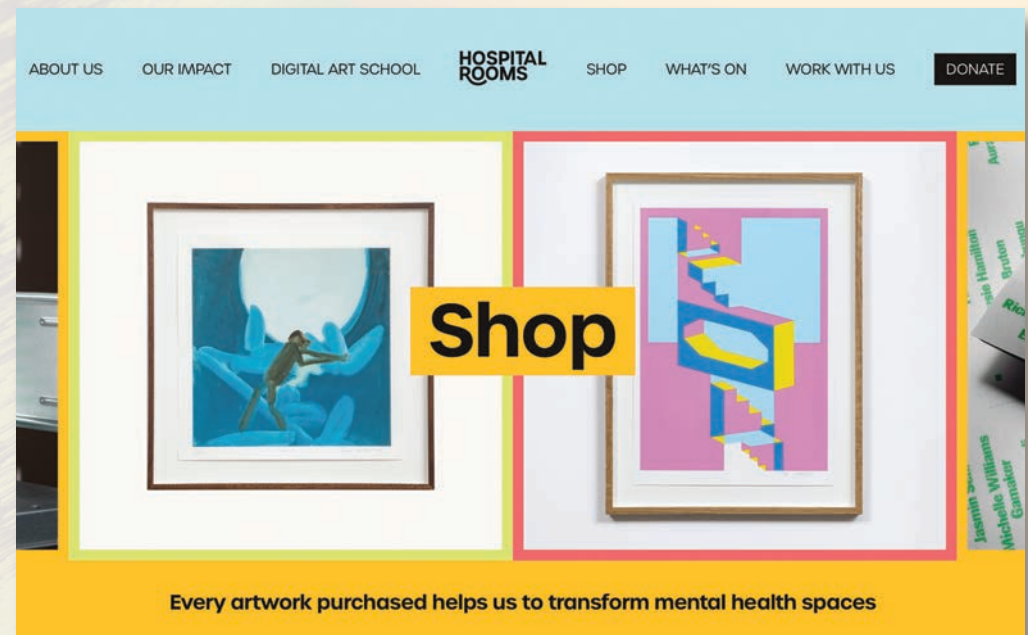


## TATE LEARNING X UNIQLO

These play sessions at the Tate Modern saw thousands of children participate in free paper workshops. Our commitment to putting paper in the hands of young creatives has also seen us work closely with the circular materials hub Renée, who have so far put 10.9 tonnes of materials back into the hands of creatives, rather than into waste systems.



# HOSPITAL ROOMS



Hospital Rooms was founded in 2016 in response to a need to bring a greater sense of humanity and hope into the spaces that care for people at the most vulnerable times in their lives. Designed to be physically robust and emotionally neutral, mental health wards can nevertheless become a temporary home to those who are admitted to them, with stays sometimes lasting for months at a time. But the prioritisation of clinical functionality can leave these environments feeling cold, impersonal and unwelcoming. Recognising the immense power of art to provide solace, provoke thought and

engender human connection, Hospital Rooms aims to bring about a fundamental change in the way that mental health wards are conceived, foregrounding the presence of art and creativity and transforming wards into welcoming, soothing and beautiful spaces.

GF Smith supported Hospital Rooms by providing the paper for the eponymous book(s) created to celebrate the completion of each project.



# OUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY

The International Department at GF Smith has been exporting our flagship paper range, Colorplan, to Europe and beyond for over 20 years, and we now work with partners in more than 40 countries. Many of these partnerships have been with us since the beginning, and we're proud to work with such a diverse range of independently owned businesses, just like ours. These partners range from small two-person businesses to larger companies with divisions that focus on much more than just paper merchandising. The variety in size, focus, and approach across our network creates an interesting and dynamic web of connections that has helped us bring Colorplan to a global audience.

In 2024, we've expanded further by adding a couple of new partners to our list who now service Taiwan, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia for us. But beyond growing our network, we are equally committed to growing the partners we already have. What we value most about this network is that they act as our extended arm in their markets, building personal relationships with customers just as we do here in the UK. Their local knowledge and dedication are key to helping us share the GF Smith story globally while maintaining the personal touch that defines who we are.



**PLANET**

# GF SMITH AND B CORP

## IN FACTS AND FIGURES...

### OVERALL B IMPACT SCORE

Based on the B Impact assessment, GF Smith earned an overall score of 98.2. The median score for ordinary businesses who complete the assessment is currently 50.9.



- 98.2 Overall B Impact Score
- 90 Qualifies for B Corp Certification
- 50.9 Median Score for Ordinary Businesses

As a business we want to challenge ourselves to get better and better all the time. 'Doing the right thing' is in our DNA but we wanted to find a way to become more strategic, so we can understand, and ultimately increase, our impact.

The B Corp certification is the gold standard of social and environmental practice for business so going through the B Impact Assessment process felt

both a good fit and a quite a daunting challenge.

Commercial organisations are required to provide evidence of good practice in the areas of Governance, Workers, Community, Environment and Customers.

We were delighted when we certified in May 2023 with a score of 98.2 and not one but two Impact Business Models.

### Governance 16.3

In this section we needed to demonstrate our commitment to our mission, our ethics and transparency.

### Workers 28.5

This section evaluates our contribution to the financial security, and health, safety and wellness of our people.

### Community 18.3

The community pillar looks at our engagement with and impact on the communities we operate in and source from. Internally it looks at diversity, equity and inclusion and civic engagement.

### Environment 31.8

This section evaluates our environmental impact both in our directly in our operations and in our supply chain.

We were also recognised with an impact business model for wildlife and land conservation due to our papers carrying FSC chain of custody.

### Customers 3.1

In this section we needed to demonstrate our stewardship of customers through the quality of our product and approach to customer service.

## TREES FOR CITIES

We have committed to planting 18,000 trees in the Hull area in order to offset the personal carbon footprint of every member of the GF Smith team. This helps to reduce the equivalent of approximately 1,500 tonnes of Co2 every year.



## GOOD OPERATIONAL PRACTICES



Heat maps are run regularly in our warehouses to ensure that the most frequently accessed stock is the quickest to obtain, reducing the energy usage of our forklift trucks.

Machines descheduled or not being utilised are not left powered up or dry cycling.

## CARBON REDUCTION

Since 2018 we have reduced our Scope 1 & 2 emissions 75% from 760 tonnes of carbon to 200 tonnes of carbon being produced per year. The 200 tonnes of Co2 still being produced come mostly from our gas heating system that heats our warehouses; however, we are actively looking for ways to reduce this to be able to reach our goal of becoming a carbon free site by 2027. Since 2019 our Scope 3 emissions have reduced by 9% with more steps being taken to help us bring that down even further.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

As a business we are always working to make sure we are meeting the UN's SDG's. Although we want to meet every goal, we excel more in certain areas. Some examples of those are SDG 3 (Good Health & Well Being), SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

## GOOD ENGINEERING PRACTICES

Where possible we have fitted variable speed inverter-controlled motors to ensure our plant is as efficient as possible in the use of electricity. We also now always install low energy LED lighting when they get renewed.

As part of our planned preventative maintenance

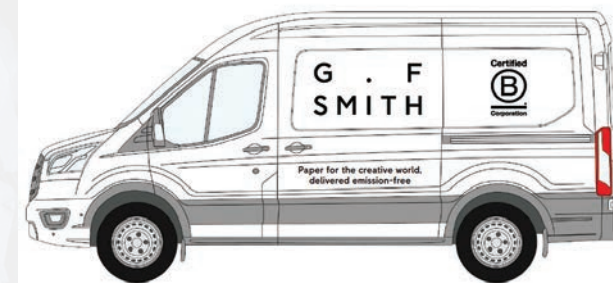
scheme we check for air leaks to minimise the work of our compressors and ensure they are working under the lowest possible load.

Energy efficiency is now always seen as a leading factor when making decisions on new plants and machinery.

## COMPANY TRANSPORT

Since 2021 our company car policy is to be fully electric with hybrids only supplied due to driver circumstances. Drivers of either company or private electric vehicles can charge their cars on site at no cost.

A review of our HGV fleet operation was also conducted. Our fleet has now been decommissioned and palletized loads are now moved using the national pallet network in order to remove Co2.



## CYCLE TO WORK

Our cycle to work scheme has been in operation since 2013 and has been used to purchase over 95 bicycles. Our onsite bicycle storage has recently been extended and electrical sockets are also provided for our team members to charge electric bikes, to try and convince employees to bike to work rather than taking other forms of transport that produce Co2.

## GREEN ELECTRICITY

We now have three solar PV installations across the Hull site, a space of over 20,000 square feet with the potential to generate 200kW. All our grid electricity also now comes from renewable sources.

# A WORD ABOUT PAPER

Paper is remarkable. It is one of the most important raw materials of the creative process and an essential component in learning and communication. It is inherently sustainable, but misconception can occur.

We believe that we have a role in fostering better understanding of the sustainability of paper. We do this through our own communications and working with 'Two Sides', a global, not for profit global initiative promoting the unique sustainable attractive attributes of print, paper and paper packaging.

Paper is also a key material in the search for plastic-free solutions.

## FSC

We became certified by the Forest Stewardship Council in 2007. This means that our papers are made with, or contain, pulp that comes from FSC certified well-managed forests and other controlled sources and follows a certified chain of custody. It also means that our paper comes from sustainably managed forests where the cycle of planting, growing and logging is carefully controlled.

## CHLORINE

A key environmental concern when it comes to creating paper is the bleaching of pulp. Nearly all of our papers made from virgin fibre are either classified as Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF), or Totally Chlorine Free (TCF), which means the bleaching process avoids the use of harmful chlorine, or does not use it at all.



**G F  
SMITH**

**PAPER WITH SOUL**