

We
Made
That

Impact Report

Certified



Corporation

2023

Measuring our progress in delivering better

We Made That create equitable places through incisive research and impactful projects. We work exclusively for the public sector and charities and are committed to delivering public good.

Together, we provide considered and thorough intelligence, shape healthy, fair and well-designed places and bring life and value to the built environment.

Building on the findings in our first Impact Report in 2022, this report brings to the fore wider perspectives from our team who worked collectively to deliver impact and change across all strands of our work in 2023.



Team workshop on “Things We Are Doing” now, and reflecting on the “Things We Won’t Do” list exhibited at the Royal Academy’s Radical Thoughts on Architecture in 2019.

Our team members who contributed to our impact across 2023 included:

Tasnia Alam, Antonia Alexandru, Charlotte Amos, Thomas Aquilina, Eve Avdoulos, Suzi Bennett, Larry Botchway, Camille Chabrol, May Collins, Silvia Commisso, Aimee Daniels, Mark David Flynn, Oliver Goodhall, Temitayo Ince, Diego Jenowein, Holly Lewis, Rachel Lucido, Lee Marable, Cat Mullan, Lily Moodey, Stavros Oikonomidis, Clare Rishbeth, Ana Santini, Carla Saunders and Benedikt Stranak.

We Made That are a Certified B Corporation®, a businesses that meet the highest independently-verified standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability.

Our places



Basildon Town Centre where we have been working to re-purpose a 1970s former cinema to meet wider creative sector growth opportunities

Deepening relationships in the places where we work

2023 brought unprecedented challenges to the places in which we've worked - from the worsening climate crisis and widening social inequality, to declining participation. Throughout this period, our clients and collaborators trusted us to deliver innovative and engaged responses to these challenges.

This year we have deepened our relationships within London, the West Midlands, the North West, and a number of coastal towns. We have delivered activity that builds on a track record of meaningful change from Croydon to Wolverhampton to Rochdale, working in 27 high streets and town centres across the UK.

Increasingly in 2023, multiple members of the team have been stepping forwards into key advocacy activity through design review panels, regional and national roles to champion positive change.

We have been emboldened to initiate and convene thought leaders around subjects we feel strongly about.

This included hosting a roundtable in London with key stakeholders and policymakers on the opportunities, challenges and best practice of industrial intensification as landmark industrial schemes came to fruition. In Manchester we

brought together stakeholders to think about embedding culture and the potential of policy makers and the sector working together to support 'creative corridors' across our northern towns and cities.

We achieved B Corporation certification in 2021, when there were around 400 B Corps in the UK and only a handful of built environment businesses meeting this verified standard. As a B Corp, we are part of a global movement of companies using business as a force for good, with over 1,900 now certified in the UK, and 8,284 across the world.

This Impact Report reflects on our work in 2023 across:

15 urban research studies

21 strategies and masterplans

20 public spaces and buildings

5 design advocacy roles

This Impact Report is structured according to the five pillars within the B Impact Assessment:

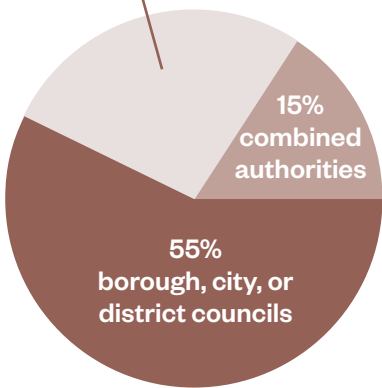
1. Community:
Developing vibrant and strong communities
2. Customers:
Achieving high impact and value
3. Environment:
Championing planet and resource protection
4. Workers:
Fostering inclusive workplace culture
5. Governance:
Ensuring accountability and transparency

Our places

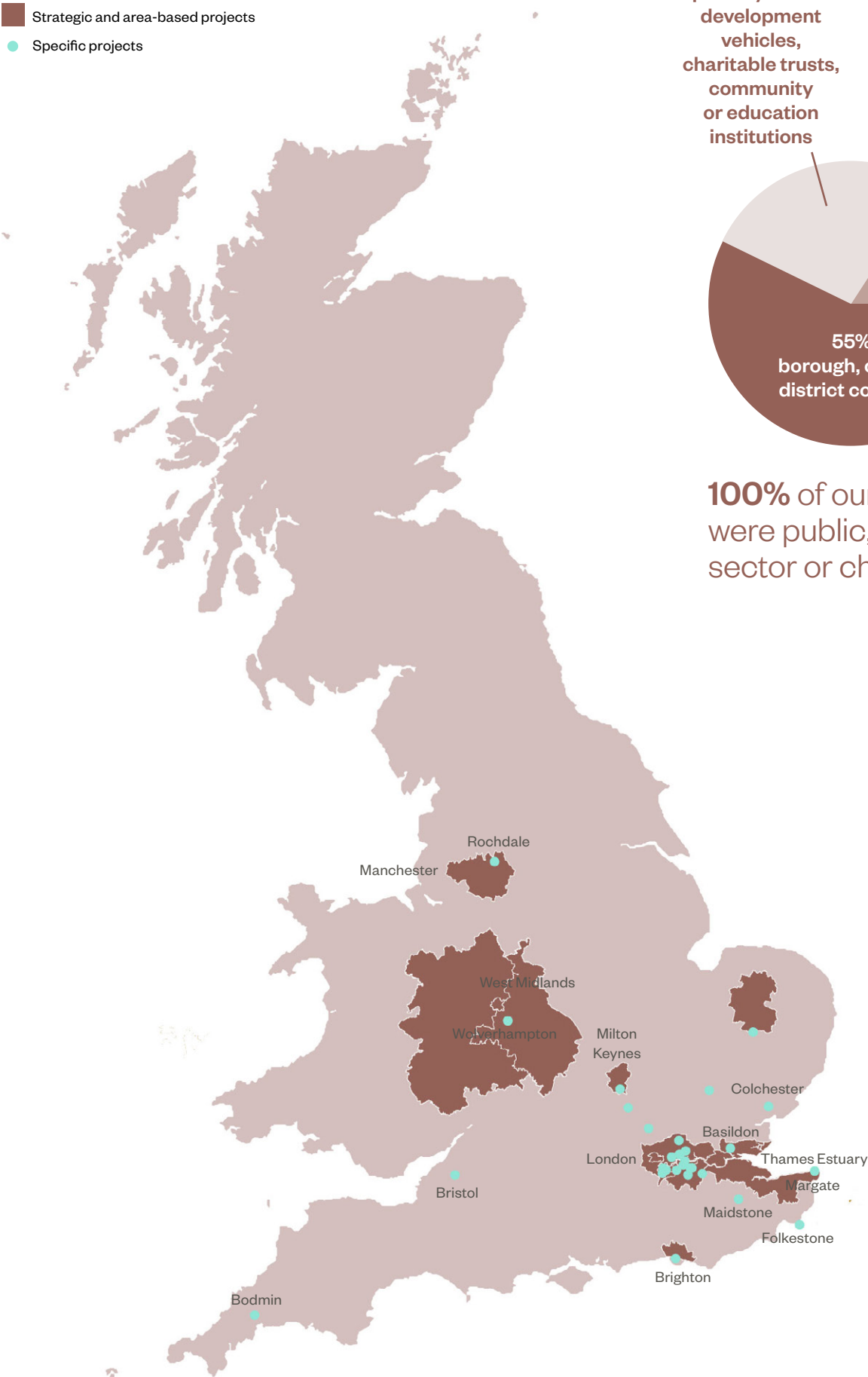
Key

- Strategic and area-based projects
- Specific projects

26% publicly owned development vehicles, charitable trusts, community or education institutions



100% of our clients were public, third sector or charities



Our 2023 impact at-a-glance



66% of our projects used a collaborative public process, with engagement and participation embedded in design development



48% of our projects were in low- or moderate-income neighbourhoods



70% of our projects were with repeat clients



7,800+ people engaged directly with our project development processes



86 events and workshops captured the priorities of a range of local stakeholders



2 roundtables convened to explore leadership in delivering industrial intensification and embedding culture



93% of our projects rethink or adapt uses on 'brownfield' sites



70% of our projects were for government organisations and 44% outside of London



£8.5m funding secured for adaptive re-use of buildings for new uses



70% female team and 15% LGBTQIA+, 20% BAME, 10% disabled



627.25 hours of team knowledge, visits and learning sessions



33.25 days of social and environmental 'champion' time spent driving practice improvement

A multiplicity of voices

Barking Industria is one of the first stacked, multi-storey industrial developments in the country, supported by the Mayor of London and Be First Regeneration Limited (Architect lead: Haworth Tompkins)

A multiplicity of voices

Preparing our first Impact Report covering 2022 inspired a robust period of self-reflection across the team. We tested ways of measuring our actions and impacts. We discussed and selected indicators of change that mattered to us. We imagined how we could do better. We then did it all again to assess our progress and understand our shortcomings.

Along the way, it became clear that this collective way of doing things should narrate our second Impact Report.

In 2023 we were excited to welcome several new senior appointments to the practice. Eve Avdoulos assumed the role of Senior Associate, leading the Urban Research Unit, while Tom Fox joined as Senior Associate leading on strategies and masterplans. Additionally, we welcomed Thomas Aquilina as an Associate, who brings experience in designing, writing, editing and convening across academic, activist and practice-based settings.

After a full day of collective team reflection on impact, **Thomas Aquilina** joins Impact Champion, **Lily Moody**, to share his perspective on the impact detailed in this report. In doing so, he draws out some of the less tangible spaces and places where our 2023 impact can be found.

it. How has this process built towards a fuller understanding of our practice's impact?

TA: I've been convening conversations to think about our work in expanded ways, both directly and indirectly, and to create a critical dialogue between each other and across projects. Through pin-up sessions and workshops, a number of critical themes have started to emerge.

The way we intervene in projects is usually at a very early stage, at the origin point of a project or at times when a project is yet to be conceived. It means we're often brief-building with our clients and communities. At this defining stage, we get to ask: what can we embed within a brief for the most impact? I am interested to think together how we can push this for spatial justice.

LM: Thomas, in the past few months you have been organising moments for us to come together collectively as a practice to look at our work-in-progress and discuss connections between



Thomas Aquilina, Associate, in conversation with Lily Moody, Impact Champion

LM: This idea of understanding our impact in relation to the stage at which we work is interesting to think about. This came up as we attempted to define impact with the team across several dimensions, including scale, time, and the political process. How do you define impact?

TA: By adopting a street-level perspective in all projects. As a practice, this kind of ground-level view helps us in our role as facilitators, whether that is convening a local authority or engaging with bottom-up movements and organisations. We aim to connect the two by making space for the ground-up voices and for their ideas and expertise to be seen and heard by the authorities.

“A material part of my role is to have us return to the fundamentals and question, think further, about key terms or ideas that we get behind and that galvanise our sense of practice. We cannot take for granted ideas around public good or impact or engagement.”

LM: We’ve had multiple conversations about how we seek out and platform bottom-up expertise, especially given that more people than ever are engaged with our projects this year— at least 7,800 people across 86 workshops and events. Can you reflect on what the team has discussed around experiences of engagement in 2023?

TA: What we’ve heard across our conversations on embedding

engagement is an attempt to listen to the quieter voices within a community. It’s clear a huge part of this is about seeking out spaces in which to hear those voices.

Finding the right kind of space to host conversation has taken us to a theatre, a brewery, a mosque, a church, a crèche, a food bank. These are essentially all spaces of community where we have to insert ourselves. And that’s a real shift in the dynamic of architects as experts. It’s a shift in this way of thinking, which prompts how we might unlearn our practices.

This should make us think about hierarchies in a different way and towards something more horizontal. As we enter back into communities or insert ourselves, it’s trying to get to know the community on their terms, in their spaces and to learn their languages. Then it becomes a question of how that language gets translated in form, in aesthetics and in the ambition of the work.

Doing public work is difficult. It’s often slow, and there’s a lot of negotiation in that process. But we embrace this way of working and maintain a commitment to it.

LM: The value of the impact reporting process, I think, is in the opportunity to formalise conversations about how we can do better. Reflecting on your comment that we can sometimes take for granted the idea of engagement, how do you think we can we move beyond this?

TA: Part of it is being clearer about these terms, and part of it is to find more nuance in them too. So when we say we deliver for public good, what does that actually mean? This report attempts to make that dialogue present. Perhaps this is best articulated in the centre-fold pages where each team member describes impact on their own terms - a multiplicity of voices.

“I think it’s about creating a more open dialogue within the practice. It’s about enriching that collective conversation that also becomes more critical and more creative.”


LM: What provocations would you like to leave readers of our second Impact Report with?

TA: Part of this exercise has been to say ‘How do we reflect back to move ourselves forward?’

While this is our second Impact Report, it is also a reflection on the first iteration and looks to give more voice and more space to the multiple authors of the work within the practice. Part of the making of this report has included the beginning of a new practice manifesto called “Things We Are Doing”. It is, in essence, a flip on the “Things We Won’t Do” poster made for the Royal Academy 2019 exhibition ‘What is Radical Today?’.

This report looks to address impact in a more rigorous way - to go beyond numbers and statistics, to think about impact in more intangible places. It is to understand impact less about a final outcome, but more as something that is work-in-progress and that is delivered in multiple ways on an everyday basis. The everyday is a feature in our work because the work itself often finds itself in the margins of overlooked or forgotten places in cities. At the same time, ‘the every-day’ is something that we are reminded about when drafting our own manifesto for how we might want to have impact in our work each day. This idea of trying to define or redefine impact is an ongoing process.

How do you define impact and where do you see it in your work?

Impact is viewed across the team through multiple lenses. In a practice-wide conversation, we considered our impact across these various dimensions: temporal, community, process, scale, ethics, theory, research, politics and movements. Guided by **Thomas Aquilina**, film maker **Dion Barrett** captured the teams insights through a series of conversations and [interviews](#) .



Tasnia Alam on understanding the community: Impact means making a change. It's a key role to understand the community. For me, it's elevating unheard voices.



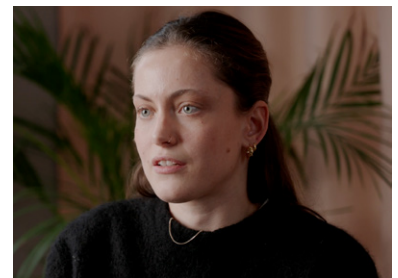
Eve Avdoulos on spending time on the ground: Instead of laying back and saying, 'we're gonna host a workshop and everybody has to come to us', we will actively say, where are the community

centres? Where are the churches? Where are the food banks? Where are these areas that we can put ourselves into to just make it easier to have those conversations for other people? It's hard work, it's not easy. But I do think that has impact.



Larry Botchway on the importance of humility: I think humility could be considered in two main ways. One is acknowledging that you might not have made the right decision, but the other is to also acknowledge your position in the context. Are you the right person for the job? Do you have the right ideas? Do you have the right perspectives?

And I think in a lot of projects, we find opportunities to first of all acknowledge that we're not if we're not the right voice. So that's the point of engagement. Acknowledging that it's not your opinion that matters, but others.



May Collins on communicating outcomes: We are often designing with an intended impact in mind, which is tied to the design outcome. An important part of achieving this impact is being able to communicate to clients and stakeholders what the outcomes could look like.



Tom Fox on the long view: Adjusting people's eyes to see change happening over a longer period of time is something that I think we're skilled in. And trying to structure a conversation around things that might change over timeframes that people aren't used to thinking across is

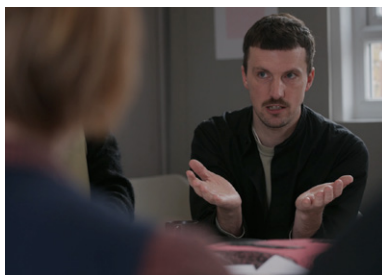
something which I think we do quite a lot, and well. And that really relates quite directly to the climate and biodiversity crises.



Silvia Commisso on the value of building from small interventions: It's really important that we think about how we can make a small intervention build to a larger vision and through that we actually trigger something to happen in the next steps. Sometimes we work towards projects that will see real impact in 50 years' time.



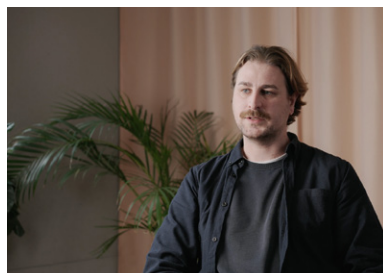
Rachel Lucido on delivering projects in direct response to need: Working with stakeholders and key user groups to deliver projects that respond to local need and facilitating the use of new spaces according to the desires of the end users is a critical pathway for impactful outcomes.



Oliver Goodhall on evidencing change: It's important to be able to evidence change so that decision-makers can take better, more robust decisions about how funding is directed. This is the kind of impact that we've

been involved with: 'Here is the evidence and what can you do about it'.

Mark David Flynn on a new era of 'co-': I saw the front of a magazine that said, 'we've now entered the era of 'co-'. It's about co-delivering, co-designing and co-production. I guess this idea of 'co-' can be seen as a bit of a buzzword at the moment, but I really think permeates across all the work we do in the office.



Holly Lewis on collective effort: I think we're keen to keep exploring how we continue to generate collective effort behind our mission. If you go back to the very kernel of what the practice was, and the reason it was called, We Made That was decided that lots of people could of be part of that movement, right? It's a collective in the name of it.



Lee Marable on skills and learning: It's about working with clients and in places that can benefit from the specific skills that we have, where we can bring a fresh approach to new or continued challenges. This always means learning from each other.



Cat Mullan on feedback: It feels like you're creating impact when everything is going right. But it's also important, to look back and say "okay, what isn't working?". Feedback is so much of an important part of driving that change. So I think through a lot of our internal processes here, we do take the time to reflect on what's worked well, and feedback is such a big part of that.



Lily Moodey on lived experience: We started from the perspective that you cannot understand the quality of a place without understanding people's experience of it. There is real value in people's perception of place and in creating a way for people to communicate their experience of place.



Clare Rishbeth on care and language: How do we share language to describe what we feel about place? When we're in very diverse settings, wanting to listen to a whole range of different people, how do we find a language to help us do that and help to make sure that we're listening accurately to what people want to say?

Our purpose and impact in action



Margate where we have established a high level vision, strategy and delivery pathways for 55,300 m2 of screen, mixed media, creative production hub and supporting uses (Photo: Philipp Ebeling)

1. Community

Cultivating good place stewardship

The “Community” pillar focuses on engagement with local communities, promoting diversity and inclusion, and supporting social and environmental initiatives. It means being a positive influence, seeking to benefit all stakeholders. Impact is evaluated through how we contribute to the economic and social well-being of the communities in which we operate.

Reflecting on a year in which we saw an over 30% increase in the number of people engaged through collaborative public processes — to a total of over 7,800 — team members **Mark David Flynn** and **Larry Botchway** share thoughts on the purpose and benefit of ensuring the public are driving the collaboration we champion.

Delivering economic and social wellbeing for people and communities has always been a priority for We Made That. In 2023, we committed to new processes and methods to further embed community co-design and co-creation in our work, empowering people to make decisions about how public space is used.

“The way we’ve approached engagement has evolved quite a bit over the last nine or ten years”, reflects Project Architect, Mark David Flynn. “When I first started it might have been post-it notes on a map, for example, one-off engagement events with

people from a local community. That has evolved into a more multi-stranded process where it’s about taking people on the journey from early in the design process right up until construction and afterlife and legacy as well.”

We have refined our processes to maximise public contribution. This includes continuing to co-commission talented local partners – such as Turf Projects in Croydon – to secure local skills and services on projects. We have also increased our use of participatory research methods, arming people who are already experts on their places

with research methods that capture and communicate their experiences and ideas.

“Part of the focus for us, this year, has been paying attention to who specifically you are trying to hear from, acknowledging who you’re not hearing from, and finding alternative ways to engage with the people you are prioritising.”

—Larry Botchway, Architect and Engagement Champion

Sometimes this is about finding events and spaces where they feel comfortable. 2023 saw our team engage people in schools, theatres, food banks, creches, pubs and gardens. We also ran public competitions, inviting submissions of creative proposals, deliberately asking people to express their ideas in a way that felt most comfortable to them, such as the Lambeth Your Streets Your Way project.

As Larry says, “If you want people to use spaces you are creating,

then you need to find out what they actually want. It's the most logical approach – who is the end user? What is their perspective? How can we centre their perspective in what we're trying to create? It just makes sense."



Workshops with young people to re-imagine 10 streets in Lambeth

 **Lambeth Your Streets Your Way**

Bringing life to leftover spaces

Commissioned by Lambeth Council, we facilitated a public competition inviting residents to reimagine their urban landscape. Participants submitted creative proposals to reshape public spaces and enhance community life through mural design, wayfinding and other engaging design proposals, to improve the pedestrian and cycling experience for the people of Lambeth. Each submission was reviewed against set criteria. The evaluation process was conducted by a local judging panel, comprised of local community leaders.

Following a series of recommendations and further detailed design development from We Made That, the winning proposals are to be developed

further and delivered through Lambeth Council's public realm and street improvement programmes. Some of the less complex proposals have already been implemented, and options to deliver larger schemes will be tested through incorporation into wider regeneration projects.

"The idea is that the community has the chance to bring life to these spaces and think about how they could be improved. These are leftover spaces, so this is not only about an architectural dimension, but also about putting the use of the space in the hands of the community."

— Larry Botchway, Architect



Through this project:

40 local people,
from the ages of
6-74, participated
in shaping ideas for
their neighbourhood

10 streets re-
imagined

4 workshop
sessions with
community groups

27.5hrs spent
supporting
community
members to develop
and refine proposals

Building in long-term guardianship to new public realm and community facilities

Developed from an earlier We Made That feasibility study for implementing community uses across local train stations in Greater Manchester, the Platform Park project offers a unique opportunity to transform the disused station platforms at Rochdale Station into a new open green space for use by the local community. The project seeks to make a feature out of the historic platform wall, and to provide spaces for growing and cultural uses, a multi-functional community and cafe building, new accessible entrance to the park - and a 'People's Platform' space for activities and events.

The success of the project will rely on continuing support from local community and food growing groups who will form part of the co-design process to create a space that they have stewardship over.



A new elevated park on disused former station platforms supporting wider community uses

“We were working with the local community because we wanted them to be stewards and guardians of the spaces. So without them it wouldn’t work.”

— Mark David Flynn, Project Architect

Through this project:

19 community, cultural and food growing groups identified to be part of the design process and take ownership of future spaces

2 community workshops so far to develop and set the spatial briefs and project direction

1 established local partnership for future project stages

2. Customers

Sustained commitment to places for culture

The “Customers” pillar centres on delivering value and promoting public benefit. It means driving positive impacts for society and the environment through our services via the people who commission them, our clients. Impact is evaluated through how we support the greater good and if those services are targeted toward under-served populations.

In 2023, 70% of our work was with repeat clients, building on a track record of delivering value for places and allowing us to robustly tackle engrained challenges, including significant and long-standing issues of deprivation, legible and increasing inequality, and gentrification.

A particularly significant relationship has been with the Greater London Authority’s Culture and Creative Industries Unit, whom we have worked with across the last decade to understand, support and embed culture within the capital. 2023 marked ten years of We Made That’s engagement with culture in London and to mark this, team members **Oliver Goodhall** and **Eve Avdoulos** discuss what it means to have sustained involvement with a particular client and subject matter.

Across the last 10 years, we’ve repeatedly worked for the Greater London Authority (GLA), and the Mayor of London, looking at what it means for culture to be

an important part of London and its fabric. In 2013, we produced London’s first map of creative and artist workspace. This was a new way of looking at the city

for the Mayor of London and for the planning authority. It was about mapping something that otherwise hadn’t been well understood. At that time, there was an enjoyment of London as a place where you could consume culture through museums, galleries, and theatres, but there was little understanding or appreciation of what creatives in the city, producing art and other elements of the creative supply chain, were doing to drive London’s position as a global cultural force.

“Last year, economic analysis showed that one in five jobs in London were in the creative industries, so this is a hugely important sector”,
— Oliver Goodhall,
Co-founding Partner

“It seems obvious now just how important culture is to London’s economy. But 10 years ago, the former Mayor wasn’t even aware how much artist workspace there was in London. That information wasn’t available,” Oliver continues.

The Artists’ Workspace Study in 2013, set out how and where artist workspace operated in London, what the challenges were, and what to do about it. At the time, 51% of affordable artist workspace was occupying

rented or licensed property. A key finding was the precarious tenure of much of London's artist workspaces, with 35% of workspaces reporting their property to be under threat within the next decade. One of the things we identified to address this was the idea of 'artists' enterprise zones'. This eventually morphed into the GLA's Creative Enterprise Zones programme, which we supported with action plans, evidence and case-making. In 2023, we completed the first evaluation of the Creative Enterprise Zones. We are now able to clearly see a direct connection between that 2013 study and an impactful programme of support for the cultural and creative sectors.

By co-ordinating thinking about what practitioners and neighbourhoods need to do to react best to evolving circumstances, Creative Enterprise Zones have proven to be demonstrably more resilient to the external forces of the cost-of-living crisis, Brexit, the impacts of COVID-19. One of the things our recent study mapping London's cultural infrastructure has revealed is that the impacts of these 'poly-crises' have been disproportionately felt by certain communities. For example, we were able to evidence that minority ethnic-owned businesses have been disproportionately impacted and have had uneven access to support. This evidence can and should allow decision-makers to take better, more robust decisions about how funding is directed in future.

"We're seeing and mapping different things now. We're dealing with longitudinal mapping to understand where change has happened", says Oliver. "It's important to recognise – particularly as we're thinking about the impacts over a longer period of time – that the Greater London Authority wants to be intelligence-led. That is a powerful thing, if you understand where change is happening and why, then you say, "we want to

intervene here." And you can be specific and clear in your action."

The team mapped London's culture infrastructure in 2013, 2017, 2018, 2021 and in 2023. This allows us to understand where the shifts are happening. The data allows us to have a greater appreciation of the importance of production space, rehearsal space, and affordable space for communities, responding to the diverse needs of different users. We're using this mapping to deliberately shape strategies and actions to support cultural infrastructure.

Senior Associate, Eve Avdoulos, reflects, "We're thinking also about where spaces for culture and communities are, and how that maps through to where there might be health inequality, whether that might be related to lack of access to transport, where it might also have a combination with access to open space. There is the idea that cultural infrastructure should be seeking to address wider societal needs, like health and well-being, like access to jobs and good work." This work is vital to support impactful action planning.

"If you don't map it, you don't have the evidence to make the case for why the public sector needs to intervene to fix something."
— Eve Avdoulos,
Senior Associate

In the Thames Estuary Production Corridor, we have been involved in building the case for investment in infrastructure for creative production in East London, South Essex and North Kent. That case-making is necessary to secure investment and partner support. The work is thinking beyond the power boundaries of any individual authority, so that the

Mayor of London is now working with neighbours in the south east to shape and support the ways in which cultural infrastructure is evolving. This is pushing eastwards towards Basildon, Southend-on-Sea or Margate, where We Made That have been working on both strategic and architectural commissions considering cultural infrastructure.

This breadth of experience in thinking about culture and the infrastructure required to support it has afforded us the opportunity to be involved in brief setting and brief building. By being at the strategic stage of projects, we have been able to identify the need to serve and support under-served populations. For example, in Ealing, we have been supporting the borough in planning for places to support the growth of the cultural industries, both in terms of consumption places and production spaces.

Eve reflected on our approach to this commission, "Part of this is looking in a more nuanced way at the types of space that are needed. What kinds of jobs are they going to produce, what jobs are needed? Which demographics are we looking at? We know, for example, in Ealing, there are a lot of young people, and potentially there's an opportunity for younger people to be more involved in cultural production. So, what spaces can facilitate that?"

Since we first looked at culture in London 10 years ago, the dial has shifted a long way towards a finer-grained understanding, mapping trends and changes as well as the 'absolute' position of London's cultural infrastructure, and a greater appreciation of who is and isn't benefiting from London's cultural strengths. Whilst many challenges remain, this long term collaboration with the GLA and others in thinking about what it means to embed culture in the capital continues to provide understanding, strategic thinking and specific interventions to overcome them.



Designer maker Jasmine Carey, founder of Deco22 at her studio at Cockpit Arts in Deptford (© Greater London Authority)

COO Creative Enterprise Zone Evaluation

Capturing creative economy resilience across London

Commissioned by the Greater London Authority, we undertook an evaluation of the Creative Enterprise Zone programme, alongside partners PRD and Wavehill. This included working closely with each of London's first six Creative Enterprise Zones first established in 2018 — Brixton, Croydon, Deptford and New Cross, Hackney Wick and Fish Island, Hounslow and Tottenham. Having built the case for programmes to protect creative jobs and spaces across London, and having undertaken much of the initial research on the Zones, we mapped both newly gained and lost creative floorspace, interviewed creative businesses and practitioners and analysed secondary data on business and economic growth

to understand the impact of the Creative Enterprise Zones Programme on creative clusters in London.

We found that while the Zones have not been completely immune to London-wide trends of falling employment numbers and a decline in businesses as a result of the challenges of Covid-19 and accompanying economic shocks, they do appear to have been more resilient, especially at the onset of the pandemic. The Creative Enterprise Zones lost fewer jobs and businesses between 2019 and 2021 than comparator areas and London overall.

Through this project:

589 artists and creative businesses supported

30,441 m2 new creative workspace delivered

14.2% net increase in creative sector jobs

100+ consortium organisations

3 new zones set to become the capital's newest CEZs

3. Environment

Adaptive re-use to drive regenerative outcomes

The “Environment” pillar underscores ecological responsibility in working towards more sustainable and regenerative outcomes. It means committing to minimising our environmental footprint by adopting sustainable practices, reducing waste, conserving resources, and decreasing emissions. Impact is evaluated through our facilities, materials, emissions, resource and energy use, and the environmental impact of our supply chain.

In 2023, 93% of our projects rethought or adapted uses on ‘brownfield’ sites. Team members **Tom Fox**, **Rachel Lucido** and **May Collins** describe how we have been thinking about the interplay of adaptive reuse, planning for nature and designing new spaces for learning about the environment.

We recognise the urgency of addressing climate breakdown across all our work. Our projects seek to improve access to public transport, promote healthy streets and support walking and cycling infrastructure to create greener and healthier places.

In 2023, we refined our approach to integrating climate principles and ways of responding to the climate emergency from the outset of all projects. This has included expanding the remit of our ‘Climate Champion,’ role internally, bringing the structured involvement of a trained individual into each project

across all strands of our work to ensure carbon reduction is locked into all project stages. This has aligned with exciting opportunities to work with clients and collaborators – such as Chiswick House and Gardens Trust – with ambitious sustainability aims.

“We have focused on adapting and re-using existing buildings in several projects this year”, says Senior Architect, Rachel Lucido. “But it’s not always just the buildings that are impacted. It’s often the people that we’re helping, the learning we’re facilitating and the organisation we’re supporting.”

Improving our climate impact has also been about sharpening our understanding of the role we play as designers in instigating change, particularly the role we play at the strategic stage of the processes we work within. We often find ourselves in the position to explain change over the long term, and with the skills to represent and communicate this change in a compelling way.

“We’re skilled in structuring a conversation around time frames that people aren’t necessarily used to thinking across. That relates quite directly to climate and biodiversity crises, to bring that horizon into people’s view, around how we should be planning and structuring change in places”, says Tom Fox, Senior Associate and Climate Champion.

This consideration of environmental impact is felt across the practice and across all work stages, not just during technical design processes. In reflecting on the impact of architectural visuals, Architectural Assistant, May Collins says, “B Corp is a certification for any kind of business, not just architects or design practices, which creates an opportunity to reflect on the role of visuals in communicating aspiration to communities and clients. I’m trying to show, if this design is produced to its best possible scenario, the impact that space could have on place, people and the environment.”



00 The Cedar Yards Community & Creative Campus

Exceeding environmental targets in a heritage setting

The Cedar Yards Community & Creative Campus is comprised of a series of four related projects at the historic Chiswick House and Gardens; a new Learning Hub building and offices, new Volunteer Base, a community garden and adaptive re-use of disused storage areas for creative workspace.

These projects respond to the Grade I Listed context, whilst adopting sustainable materials and construction. Natural materials are used extensively, including cross-laminated and rough sawn timber structures, and charred timber cladding. Additionally, photovoltaic panels above the buildings contribute to the proposals exceeding carbon net zero targets.

In the Fruit Garden, new planting will increase biodiversity to create a lush and verdant environment and referencing its historic use, whilst in the creative

campus, new roof insulation, heating and servicing will provide a more sustainable comfortable thermal environment.

“As part of the brief, the clients were really driven for a sustainable project, whilst planning considerations meant the two new buildings had to be carbon net zero. However, with the support of our clients we were able to go above and beyond this, through the choice of materials, bringing back overgrown green space, and providing insulated and greener energy for the existing buildings.” — Rachel Lucido, Senior Architect

Through this project:

2 new carbon net zero buildings

730 m2 underused space brought into use to create affordable workspaces



The Cedar Yards Community & Creative Campus is comprised of a series of four related projects



Volunteer base supporting 200 volunteers who play a key role in maintaining the House and Gardens for the public to enjoy

1,200 m2 rare surviving underused and overgrown 17th century Fruit Garden reinstated

£150,000 sustainability grant to support de-commissioning existing oil tanks for greener energy

 Creative Campus for Screen and Immersive Digital Industries, Basildon Town Centre

Re-purposing a 1970s former cinema to meet wider growth opportunities

Basildon Borough Council and partners have co-funded and secured investment, including £4.49m Cultural Development Fund (ODF) support, for affordable and flexible space for creative production, specialist and grow-on screen production

space and dedicated space for digital experiences and events.

We considered the ways in which key vacant buildings could be brought back into sustainable use. A focus has been on low carbon engineering strategies

that aligned and challenged the client's sustainability goals. A central focus to achieving a sustainable retrofit was to increase building performance through holistic design of the envelope.

This included passive design techniques such as improving air tightness, efficient internal wall insulation, improving the currently uninsulated roof and implementing triple glazed windows with solar control glazing. Whilst these techniques were still necessary to meet environmental performance

requirement, through the design process we responded to cost issues that arose from retrofitting with exemplary sustainability targets and shifted our efforts to using the building as a shell and focusing highly efficient building performance techniques into pods and rooms that could accommodate the spaces

needed. To complement this, energy efficient environmental systems are specified with recommendations of generating hot water by recovering heat from cooling system, air source heat pump with heat recovery capability and PV panels.

Through this project:

2 vacant town centre units brought back into use

1,935 m² space to create new jobs and opportunities

£4.49m funding secured to support adaptive re-use

“In order to manage the costs of a significant retrofit we started to think about how we could view the former cinema as a shell and design in the programme as a kit-of-parts. This allowed the building to become an insulated entity to meet environmental performance requirements touching as little as possible and we could implement the facilities for screen and digital industries as further insulated self-contained structures within.”

— May Collins, Architectural Assistant



Formerly vacant town centre units to be adapted for new creative, digital and screen industries uses (© Philipp Ebeling)

4. Workers

Improving transparency through inclusive feedback

The “Workers” pillar directs efforts to create positive impacts for our team and enable an empowering workplace. It means advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion, fostering fair and supportive opportunities for skills and careers growth. Impact is evaluated through securing workers’ rights, wellbeing, and professional growth, as well as positive organisational cultures.

Team members **Cat Mullan** and **Lily Moodey** explain how transparent processes and welcoming feedback leads to an inclusive workplace culture and how this experience also shapes our external approach to hiring experts from the communities we work within.

2023 saw us improve on an open and inclusive feedback process with a focus on team preferences, needs and communication. We worked to evolve our Transparent Pay and Competencies Framework – first introduced in 2022 – as a clear and structured way of describing the salaries of all roles across the practice, as well as clarifying paths to progression within and between roles. Importantly, this was refined in close collaboration with the team through a series of workshops, attributes development and collaborative benchmarking.

“We weren’t introducing a new structure, but rather iterating and improving the existing one which was really helpful,” says Cat Mullan, Head of People.

“It’s important for me, when we’re gathering feedback that it is an inclusive process, and we allow those voices to be heard and create multiple channels to allow people to participate.”



Cat Mullan and Lily Moodey in conversation with Thomas Aquilina

We have also been increasingly hiring peer researchers on projects, providing short term employment and training opportunities to a range of people from the places in which we work. It has been important for this methodology to ensure that our working environment supports a variety of backgrounds and needs, including through translation,

childcare and supportive environments for parents, and the use of methodologies that are flexible to diversity of learning and working methods.

Lily Moody, Senior Urban Researcher, reflects on the process of working with peer researchers, "We've learned that in hiring researchers from within the community, there are

certain things that you need to do to ensure that you can hire the person with the expertise in the place or experience you are studying or designing for."

Our Transparent Pay and Competencies Framework

Co-designing and refining the attributes we value as a team

Cat Mullan, Head of People, reflects on the process, "The biggest transformation between when the competencies framework was first introduced in 2022 and when we reflected on it in 2023, was the focus on the self-defined aspects. We sought feedback from the team in a number of different ways and so much of this feedback focused on how we all see our knowledge, skills and interests in the practice and how they are core to our job roles. What skills we value in our roles and in our colleagues might differ from another organisation. It's really great that the team are engaged in and welcome the opportunity to feedback on what the competencies and how this differs, role to role."

Our aim was to make the feedback process as inclusive as possible through providing multiple opportunities for all team members to share their views and by seeking feedback through several different forums and formats. We wanted team members to feel they could provide feedback in the way that felt most comfortable and productive for them.

Through this review process

we can enable better decision making around our team's needs, skills development and identify training opportunities, whilst also improving employee wellbeing and role satisfaction. Our fully transparent salary structure across the practice is a crucial part of the framework ensuring that our pay is fair, progressive and competitive in order to attract and retain our staff. Through this, we are ensuring colleagues feel they play a central role in progressing within

Through this process:

60 hours of team feedback and workshop time

20 core competencies per role

18 other skills and experience-based competencies

their careers and provide clarity on what competencies and skills need to be secured in order to progress through to higher salary bands in the framework. One of our key aims with the competencies framework is to provide the tools and support to enable opportunities for growth and professional development. Listening to the team on how we can improve these tools and enable further progression is a vital part of our annual review process.

5 engagement and professional development focused competencies

4 team feedback sessions



 Peabody Placemaking

Treating lived experience as expertise

We helped Peabody develop and pilot new ways of working, listening and thinking along with residents to improve placemaking across their portfolio. We recruited, hired and trained eight resident researchers across three different Peabody properties to reflect on what makes great places, and to co-design and test a research tool to capture other residents' perceptions of their places.

Peabody will continue to use this tool, and the learnings from our peer research process, to provide opportunities for residents to shape Peabody places. The researchers themselves reported the positive impact of participation in this project on their wellbeing, connection to place and neighbours, and paths to securing employment.

We Made That

“We started from the perspective that you cannot understand what makes a great place without understanding peoples’ experience of it. We learned a lot about the supportive environment you need to create to enable people to participate in this kind of process.”

— Lily Moodey, Senior Urban Researcher

Through this project:

8 resident researchers hired

60 hours of training support delivered



Working with resident researchers to explore placemaking

£7,200 paid to resident researchers, exceeding London Living Wage

Impact Report 2023

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5. Governance

Advocating for accountability

The “Governance” pillar focuses on our overall mission, ethics, accountability and transparency. It means engaging our team, clients and the community in achieving that mission. Impact is evaluated through approaches to equitable governance, balancing the influence of different stakeholders and holding leadership accountable for social and environmental commitments.

Among other partnerships we have built and strengthened, we’ve welcomed **Professor Clare Rishbeth** on secondment to the team in 2023 as an associate researcher funded by an ‘Innovation Scholar’ grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council UK. **Holly Lewis** reflects with Clare on the frameworks and processes that have driven progress towards our mission this year.

Our decision to seek B Corp certification was driven by a desire to have an external framework that set high standards to inform practice-wide decision-making and maximise our impact. In 2023, we had new opportunities to think about how the actions that we take as a practice both impact the team and relate to the projects that we’re working on.

Our work to support the Southwark Land Commission, for example, included wider consideration of the processes of

governance that shape the built environment. The land around us and how we use it shapes so much of our lives, and yet we rarely talk about who owns our land and who benefits most from how it is used. Despite its capacity to influence so much, decisions about land use are often made behind closed doors, without involving those most affected by it.

“What are the structural injustices that are played out through land and environment? And what can be the level of engagement

that we have in the market to change them? How do we get people’s voices heard in those processes?” says Partner, Holly Lewis, in reflecting on this work. “Through the Southwark Land Commission, we have been looking at governance, at the biggest scale – at a national scale – and also thinking about how it relates to governance internally about how we take our decisions.”

Another important development in 2023 has been the evolution of our Champion roles. The champions are colleagues with expertise in their subject areas and responsibility for holding everyone in the practice accountable for delivering to a high standard. Increasingly, these roles relate to our commitments to people and the environment.

For example, the Impact Champion is a new role in 2023. They are focused on understanding how we relate to our various commitments through B Corp, but also challenging and prompting the team to go further to achieve more through the impact of the projects. This relates to other champions that we have – an Engagement Champion who’s pushing for us to be the best that we can at engagement, and a Social Value and EDI Champion, and an Environment Champion.

All projects have dedicated reviews with those people to make sure that we’re pulling our socks up and achieving what we need to achieve.

“The Champion structure embeds accountability into the whole practice”, explains Holly. “What we’ve heard over the last six months is how it starts to trickle into how we’re accountable to our clients, developing a robustness around what this what good practice looks like. That’s only really possible because we’ve given time, and we’ve given someone a real sense of agency about what they can do. That has a brilliant ripple effect on the practice.”

Through our research partnership with Prof. Clare Rishbeth, we are co-producing work between academic and design practice. This experimental approach is a rare opportunity, and the opportunity to have it funded is even rarer. The availability of funding slightly relaxes the process, a similarly rare position to be in both design and academia, where time is precious.

“What is funded is the collaboration, so the focus is on the depth of our trust in each other and where our shared curiosity takes us. It allows us to take risks, but also enjoy that extra capacity to connect.” — Clare Rishbeth, Associate Researcher

In working with the practice over the last eight months, Clare reflected, “From a slightly external view, what I really noticed here is the way in which boundaries are broken down within the practice. There is quite a lot of agility in the way people configure differently for different projects work together because their role is suitable.”

“After this year with Clare, we’ll have a whole bank of different ways of doing things. And maybe even that process of thinking in a freer way as we’re heading into the processes will be beneficial to the practice.” — Holly Lewis, Co-founding Partner



Holly Lewis and Clare Rishbeth in conversation with Thomas Aquilina

There are a number of other partnerships outside the practice that help us deliver on our mission. The London Practice Forum brings together like-minded architectural practices - we’re all trying to do the best that we can do, even if our portfolios of work may be quite different from each other. We’ve also recently become members of Future of London. This is useful for a different reason - it’s about connecting the people who are having similar conversations around the future of their places, and how they look to support regeneration, for example, thinking about high streets and industrial spaces.

Collaboration and partnerships will continue to underpin our drive to deliver better. As Clare observes, “People in the practice work in different contexts. People

have different roles, people go into universities, people go into schools, people are on boards and panels... It doesn’t feel closed off from the outside world, but feels very kind of generative of ideas and generous in sharing those.”



One of the four workshops with stakeholders

 **Southwark Land Commission**

Deepening engagement in challenging structural injustice

Together with PRD, we were commissioned by Southwark Council to support the delivery of a Land Commission to identify how more land in the borough could deliver community benefit and how more of it could be in community and democratic control. This project took on particular significance for us, as our London office is based in Southwark.

The Commission brought together a diverse group of members that approached the question of land use from very different perspectives. All were unified in the view that social purpose must be at the centre of land use, and that this requires

a major pivot in the way that Southwark – including both the council and wider partners – currently do things.

Recommendations from the Commission include:

- Put social purpose at the heart of land use
- Map what's there and what isn't
- Take control of our land and assets
- Defend and extend affordable accommodation for all
- Cherish our natural capital and decarbonise our land
- Give the community real power and voice
- Disrupt the status quo to unlock bigger changes



Chair of the Commission, Dr Miatta Fahnbulleh, presents the outcomes of the report

Through this project:

128 institutional stakeholders invited to contribute

4 workshops held with 68 attendees

7 recommendations to help Southwark put community at the heart of how land is used

Looking ahead



Photo: Philipp Ebeling

Capturing our successes, owning our shortcomings, and renewing our commitments together

Impact Champion **Lily Moody** looks ahead.

Building in time for collective team reflection on impact has felt like a natural progression in our impact reporting. Our moments together – gathered in front of pin-up boards, sketching around a table and over coffee in the kitchen – revealed that ambition animates our team's work making better places for people and the environment. Together we saw how our common ambitions for impact – including championing the voices with the least power in the process – cut across not only the strands of our work, but also our practice operations and governance.

Convening to reflect together is an important step in preparing for our 2024 recertification as a B Corp, a process that will require a detailed evaluation of our improvement, strengths and focus. We now know that the ways in which our team strives for impact include temporal, community, process, scale, ethical, theoretical, research, political and movement-related dimensions, and have seen how these dimensions of impact stretch across all five B Corp pillars.

Picking up these different lenses and examining our impact through them has brought into focus some areas in which it is clear we can do better. It has been encouraging to see the B Lab principles for justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) develop, and echo many of the principles already embedded in our practice. However, at current, our team composition – especially our 20% Black Asian and Multi Ethnic makeup and 10% disabled makeup – reflects neither our London nor Manchester's populations. As we seek to build teams that resemble the places in which we work, achieving diversity within the practice must continue to be a priority.

Another priority area already in focus for 2024 has been structuring, calculating, monitoring and improving our work's response to the climate emergency. With extreme and devastating climate events now commonplace in the UK, the challenge is massive and urgent. With the sharpening of our environmental management system and regenerative design

approaches, it is clear we must now find ways to more robustly quantify the outcomes our project decisions have on carbon and biodiversity to validate our improvement.

With two Impact Reports under our belt, we are now comfortable with practice-wide systems for tracking B Corp standard measures and beyond. But our 2023 reflection was a reminder that the scale of our impact, and the challenges of the future, will require us to find ways to capture sometimes much harder-to-measure changes in places. How can we better track the long-term social and economic changes our work triggers in places over time? How can we balance our multi-faceted understanding of impact with even more comprehensive data collection? How can we translate the learnings from capturing our own reflections to better listen to external perspectives on the impact of our work? How might we share and exchange knowledge? How can we redefine success in business beyond profit? We are continuing to explore and refine this.

This is an ongoing process that we look forward to sharing with you.

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