

2023-2024

Impact Report



**Wildwood
Ecology**

People Planet Purpose



**Wildwood
Arboriculture**



Certified



Corporation

Introduction

Welcome to our second B Impact Report in which we'll be sharing news of our achievements over the past twelve months.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to promoting positive change for both people and the planet, continuing our mission to provide excellent service to our clients, play our part in reversing climate change and promoting a gain in biodiversity.

Reflections

The Ecology Sector is fast becoming more technologically advanced, and this has accelerated at a rapid speed in the last year. Our industry has made changes to guidance documentation to how we deliver some of our services, and this means we are now required to demonstrate its implementation. We have made every effort to evolve with those changes, getting ahead of the game in any way we can including through investing in training and new equipment such as night vision aids and AI (Artificial Intelligence).

Our work in helping to promote Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in England and Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB) in Wales has been vitally important. We've provided external training to our clients and assisted them with meeting new targets and standards for their developments.

We were also extremely proud to have won the Medium Consultancy of the Year category in the national CIEEM (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Managers) Awards of 2023 and as the icing on the cake we have now been shortlisted for Green Business of the Year for Gloucestershire. We cannot rest, however, as there is always more to do...



Achievements

We are extremely proud of the progress we made in the past year, particularly in the following areas:

- Winning the Medium Consultancy of the Year category in the national CIEEM Awards
- Shortlisted for Green Business of the Year for Gloucestershire
- Increase our protection against cyber attacks
- More of our staff are now fully qualified members of our professional body.
- Holding community days, helping out local enterprises in both Stroud and Caerphilly.
- We continue to review, update and add to our governance documents, including terms of conditions which makes it more transparent for our clients about the services we offer and expectations for either side.
- Reducing our carbon travel emissions for employee and subcontractors.
- Improving our supply chains, including the use of remanufactured laptops and monitors.
- Advocating for wildlife restoration and promoting the good work that businesses can do within our local environment
- Participation in local B Corp and similar green events and activities.

Our B Corp Impact Assessment Journey

When working through our B Impact Assessment process, it has encouraged us think about both our impact as a company and how we can help others.

There have certainly been challenges this last year including that as technologies and methodologies have advanced, we've needed to purchase new equipment, train up staff and increase our prices while remaining competitive and providing value for our clients. This is something that we'll continue to be working on going forward and provides an opportunity to delve into how AI can help us achieve this.

Looking ahead

Continuing through 2024 and looking ahead into 2025, we intend to explore the way we will incorporate AI into our day-to-day activities. We are keen to get our employees experimenting with AI, giving them an understanding of some of the ethical challenges, and put in place an AI policy and guardrails, particularly to ensure our AI use aligns with our B Corporation status.

We are also looking to measure and release our own climate impact labels for reports we create and issue to our clients and putting a figure on the 'cost' of its production. Once we have a better understanding of what the costs are, then we will truly be able to look at how we could actively reduce these costs. We are taking inspiration from the labelling work so transparently calculated and displayed by Oatly

We will continue to invest in our employees, and this starts with recruitment. We have been exploring and refining our recruitment and onboarding processes and will be able to start implementing these changes by late 2024. Areas we are looking at improving include diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). This builds on our vision and values where Wildwood Ecology is a place where everyone who works here, regardless of spiritual beliefs, birth country, race, gender or sexual orientation should feel safe and heard.

Thank you for your continued support and for joining us on this journey.



Richard Dodd BSc (Hons) CEcol MCIEEM
Managing Director



Our Purpose

We have a diverse range of clients and projects with which our staff work. This year we've made even more of an effort to support our clients in achieving a net gain in biodiversity whilst guiding them through the ecological aspects of the planning process.

We've provided training to architects and planners on **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** in England and are promoting **Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB)** in Wales as it develops along with support on newly formed **Green Infrastructure Assessments (GIA)**.

It's amazing to think that we are leaving something behind that is better than was there originally and doing our part for our future generations, while witnessing how policies and legislation are making a difference on the ground!



Our award-winning restoration project at Llwyn Celyn, Abergavenny. In collaboration with our client, The Landmark Trust, we protected and enhanced a lesser horseshoe bat roost for future generations to appreciate.

Our B Corp Journey



As a B Corp Business, we are required to consider the impact of our decisions on our staff, customers, suppliers, community, and the environment.

While it's easy to talk the talk, becoming and remaining certified is no easy feat. As with other companies that have been certified by the non-profit organisation B Lab, we also must put in a massive amount of effort to meeting rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency.



Meeting the rigorous standards set by B Lab is a time-consuming and resource-intensive process but we feel it's important, rewarding and makes us better at what we do and so is worth it! By working with us, you too are taking steps to form a better world for everyone.

To become a certified B Corp, businesses are required to complete a survey called the Business Impact Assessment - or BIA. It's not just any survey, it's one of the most comprehensive and challenging tools out there for assessing the real social and environmental impact of a business.



The BIA is operated by the independent non-profit B Lab. It allows businesses to measure the impact their business is having on the Environment, their Workers, and the Community, as well as looking at their Governance structure.


Businesses must meet a minimum of 80 points out of 200 to certify, as well as making a legal change to their business to place impact on people and planet on the same level as profit.

Our Impact Scores

We have set our goal for re-certification in 2025 and are targeting an ambitious score of 100 points (out of a maximum of 200). It's a nice round number, but also a stretch. The re-certification process has taught us that we are moving in the right direction, but you can also see that although we made strides in governance and for our employees, we have suffered a significant score reduction for environment.

Both the increases and decreases may be attributed to changes in the appraisals between 2019 and 2022. Additional questions, many of which required supplementary information to be obtained. The changes to our scores demonstrate that 'words' continue to be required to be supported with 'evidence of positive action' and we need to improve the capture and documentation of the good work we know we do.

This will be improved over the next couple of years and has highlighted to us the importance of documentation and evidence-led statements. Being able to back up our communications both internally and externally with confidence.

	2019	2022	2025 
Governance	11.8	14.3	14.3
Workers	23.6	29.8	31.5
Community	17.4	21.1	21.1
Environment	25.8	16.7	21.9
Customers	1.8	1.8	15.2
OVERALL SCORE	80.6	84.0	104.0

Goals

With our goal to become recertified in 2025 and overarching work towards Carbon Net Zero in 2030, we've broken down the actions we've taken and any light bulb moments along the way in the key impact assessment areas below:

- Governance;
- Workers;
- Community;
- Environment;
- Customers.



Governance



We are proud to be
using business as a
force for good

What we said we would do

Last year we said we'd review our businesses terms and conditions. These had not been looked at for quite a while and improvements were needed to ensure they were fair, open, and transparent.

We also said we'd continue to audit our policies and procedures and that we were working on our mental health and wellbeing policy and practices.

What we did

We reviewed and **updated our T&C's** and have made changes to them that are fair to our clients and are more transparent in terms of what they should expect from us and what we expect from them.

In addition, we've reviewed our **policies** on: Anti-Harassment & Bullying, Data Protection, Disciplinary Procedure, Driving at Work, Equality Diversity & Inclusion; Grievance Procedure, Mental Health & Wellbeing; Neurodiversity; Sickness Absence, Data Retention and Supporting Neurodiversity in the Workplace.

We issued a new H&S Manual for use within the company and ensured our Risk Assessments were up to scratch and completed for all site visits.

This year we also set up a new Senior Leadership Team as part of the decision-making mechanism within the company.

Additionally, all staff completed a **Gap Analysis questionnaire** for online safety to allow us to identify where improvements could be made.

What we're working on

Following the Gap Analysis questionnaire for online safety, we've provided interactive online training for staff members on Physical Safety which will be ongoing.

Additionally, all staff will receive a **GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations)** annual course, with monthly "bitesize" courses based on the staff responses to the Gap Analysis Questionnaire, all of which contribute to protecting our employees and the company, reducing the risk of cyber-attacks via human error. The courses tie in with ongoing Phishing Simulations to test the company for their reaction to phishing attempts.



Workers



What we said we would do

Last year we worked on the use of AI and automation to look for ways to increase the efficiency of our business, while reducing the environmental and social impact of our work. By making better use of technology our aim was to enable our teams to work smarter and not necessarily harder.

We said we'd purchase computer tablets that would enable the capture of field data immediately used for reporting. One of our main aims of doing this was to minimise taking time from our people and reliance on the use of a Time Off in Lieu (TOIL) as a sticking plaster for potential overworking and under resourcing issues.

What we did

While there is still lots more to do in this area, we made progress.

We made use our digital tablets on numerous surveys and looked at ways to maximise their efficiency at the data collection stage of a project. This led us to trial a new data collection software package which is speeding up data collection and report writing for **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** in particular.

We're continuing to investigate the benefits of **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation**. We already use ChatGPT and Co-pilot to help minimise tasks such as minute taking which makes us more present during meetings, cuts down on time needed to take notes and produces actions for those present. This is just the start!

Our Recruitment and Onboarding **Standard Operating Procedure's (SOPs)** were reviewed and amended using proactively sought feedback from our new starters.

We rolled out a new and updated **Staff Feedback Survey** across the whole company which enabled staff to have their say anonymously about our company and managers to have insight into what our staff thought.

We also noted a substantial improvement via direct staff feedback and looking into our stats in the number of overtime hours our people worked. Additionally, any TOIL taken is now done so as close to source as possible helping to manage staff's fatigue levels throughout the year. All of this enabled us to better protect our workers' weekends and evenings by careful time management and regular encouragement from line managers and the SLT.

In 2023, we completed a **Salary Review** for staff up to and including Senior Ecologist Level to ensure our salaries are competitive, which helped with the massive increase in living costs. Additionally, we completed a **Real Living Wage** review for all staff employed within Wildwood.

Also, in 2023 we began providing **CEO Townhall Meetings** for the whole company ensuring that the latest company news was passed on in a personal way to staff and they were given the opportunity to ask questions directly there and then. This has continued into 2024.

We also rolled out our new upgraded H&S Manual across the company and took even more measures to improve our workers' safety while working for Wildwood.



What we're working on

We continue to adjust our **Career Progression Framework** document. We believe that this is an exemplar document, and are extremely proud of it, regularly getting great feedback from our staff on how it helps guide them through their career journeys with us. This has certainly been welcomed and valued by our employees, as has the salary review, we carried out in late 2023.

In 2024 we plan to provide formal **Stress Management / Resilience Training** to staff to ensure they can work in a way that will assist with enabling their careers and taking care of their welfare which in the long term will invest in the longevity and sustainability of the company.

Community



What we said we would do

We said last year that we would continue to offer our support for local businesses and provide both financial and voluntary labour support where we are able to do so. We also said we'd be seeking to improve diversity and inclusion within our company through apprenticeships or internships from people who would not otherwise have an opportunity to work in our sector.

What we did

Our talented Wildwood staff continued to make a real difference in their local communities.

Many of them volunteer outside of their working hours, and one of the things in which we pride ourselves is ensuring working hours are sufficiently flexible to allow staff to volunteer their time sometimes during work hours. For example, two members of our Caerphilly Team are **Bat Conservation Trust (BCT)** bat carers and sometimes get calls to collect and care for sick and injured bats. These visits can occasionally be needed during working hours and our fantastic staff make up their hours in their own time.

Additionally, one staff member presents the Bat Conservation Trust's Using Your Ears workshop, another volunteers with Cardiff LNP's dormouse and botany surveys. Our Director of Ecology also led a bat hibernation check of Stroud Caves, while two of our Stroud Ecologists attended a careers fayre in **Cirencester Kingshill School** to explain what ecological consultancy involves as a job for students.

Wildwood Ecology also ran a stall at the NEC Farm Business Innovation Show which was in November 2023, providing advice and solutions to landowners regarding Biodiversity Net Gain.

Additionally, another member of staff provided a lecture on Biodiversity Net Gain for students at the **Royal Agricultural University** while another volunteers his time working with Oxfam pricing the vinyl donations. We also have a heroic member of staff who sits on the board of trustees for **Allsorts** additional needs charity each month. As you can see, our staff are skilled in many areas and are extremely generous!

We have also taken on some second career team members who have switched from completely different professions. We feel that the wealth and breadth of experience they bring to the team is invaluable.

What we're working on

We fully intend to continue to work with our local communities and continue our motto: **People, Planet, Purpose**. We will continue to provide group voluntary days each year to support worthy causes that we learn about.

We also intend to continue looking into apprenticeships/internships to enable people who would not otherwise have an opportunity to work in our sector.



Environment



What we said we would do

Last year we said we'd continue to work on the way we work. With much of our emissions related to the use of vehicles, reducing mileage, and finding smarter ways of travel has been one of our priorities. We also said we would look at ways of supporting our subcontractors in limiting their impact when working on projects with us, such as improved focus on lift sharing and use of local talent.

What we did

This year, we again worked on driving down our carbon footprint towards that ever-coveted Net Zero. Whilst working on this, in the interim, we have also offset our 2023 emissions of 50.2t CO₂e through peatland restoration and conservation in Indonesia.

We are delighted to report we have made progress in reducing our company's carbon footprint with one of our largest emission sources – vehicle fuel.

While the total number of miles driven within our company by our staff's own vehicles has remained constant (Figure 1), it should be noted that in 2023 we had more staff than ever before, meaning that the average number of miles that staff drove their own cars decreased from 2021 to 2023.

Total number of miles driven by employees in own vehicles

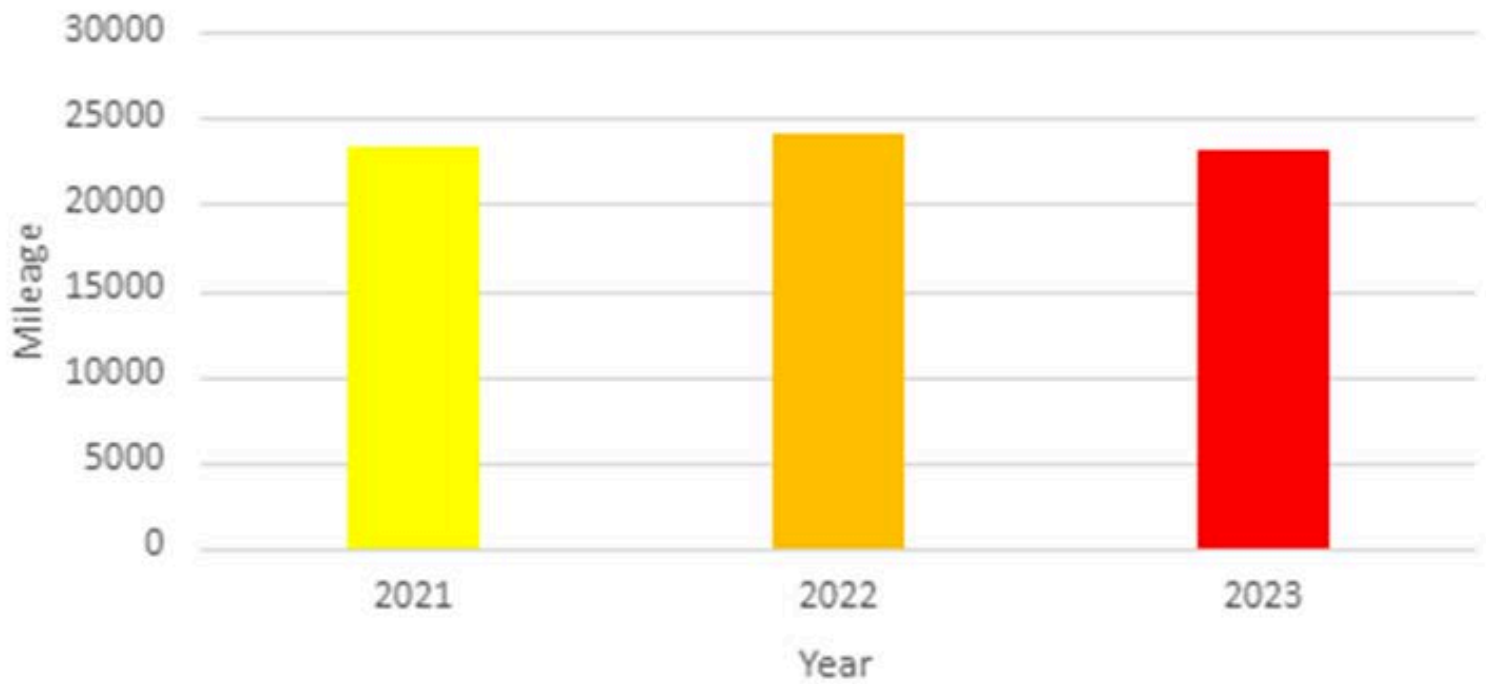


Figure 1 - total number of miles driven by employees using their own personal vehicle between 2021-2023

Total number of miles driven by company vehicles

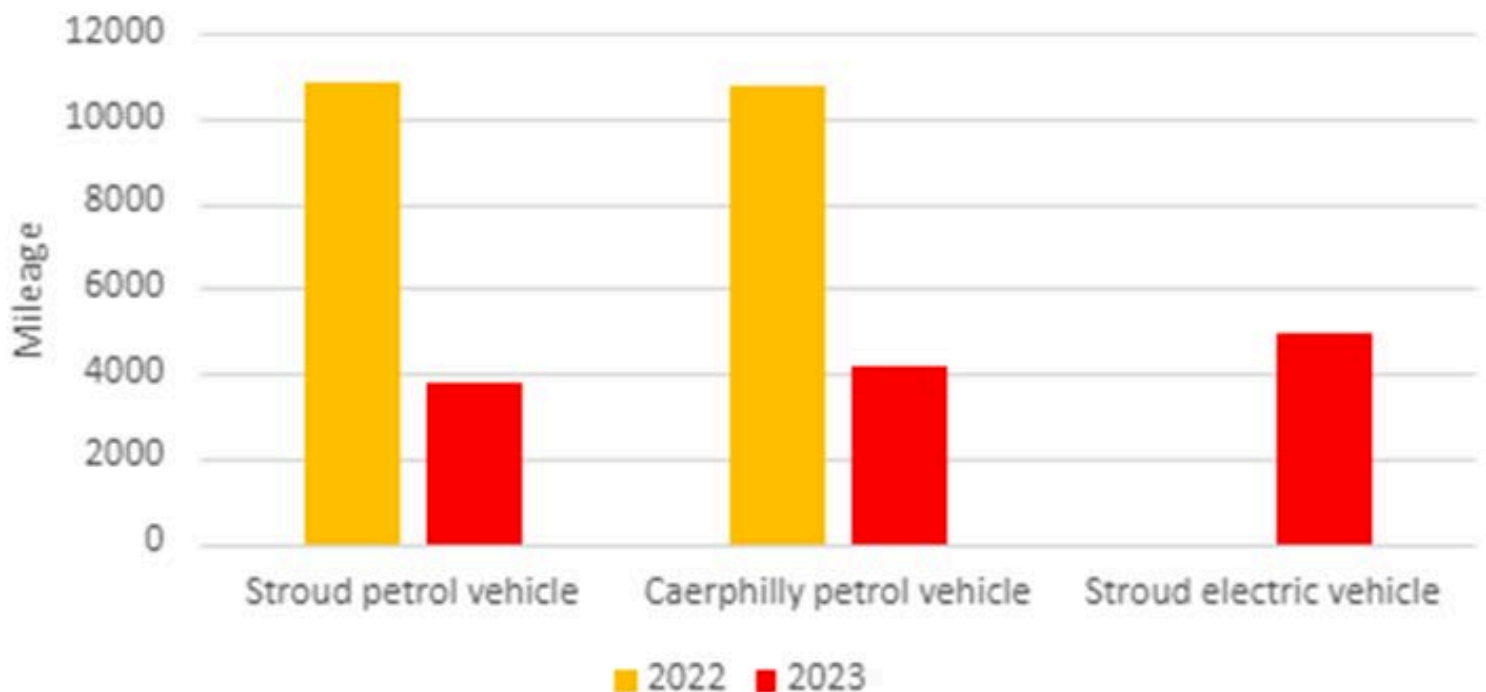


Figure 2 - total number of miles driven by employees using a company-owned vehicle between 2022-2023

In addition, we can proudly show that the number of miles driven in company petrol/diesel vehicles dropped by a whopping 60% in one year from 2022 to 2023 despite us having more staff in 2023 (Figure 2). This was assisted by a combination of our drive (pun intended) for lift sharing and the introduction of our electric vehicle to our company fleet. Consequently, our company car vehicle emissions dropped from 13 tonnes CO₂e in 2022 to 2.91 tonnes CO₂e in 2023!

We have yet to analyse the figures of our subcontractors' miles but are hoping to also see a decreasing trend in their emissions as we have actively been selecting sub-contractors located as close as possible to our sites in a bid to reduce mileage and our emissions plus encourage car sharing.

Additionally, we continued in our head office to minimise both Scope 1 & 2 emissions, by occupying a more efficient building with no gas emissions.

Due to the new Welsh Government Regulations, from the 6th of April 2024, our office general waste bins were no longer emptied and instead recycling receptacles in all communal areas were provided and emptied daily. These included food waste, plastics, glass, card, and paper.

In our Caerphilly Office, our staff adhere to a Fair Use Policy for Energy – committing to switching off devices fully, not leaving them on standby, using additional heating or cooling devices only when necessary and according to a written agreement. We also adhere to Government Planning Policy, whereby society has limited access to parking, in a bid to lower congestion and environmental pollution, by making use of our landlord's parking permit scheme where the number of permits is half the number of employees.

We carried out a company-wide commuting survey to enable us to more accurately assess the company's carbon footprint plus got our staff involved further by asking for their ideas in working towards net zero.

We continue to apply our internal policy of reviewing whether we should undertake work more than 65 miles from our office location to minimise emissions and to use our electric vehicle wherever possible for site visits.





What we're working on

This coming year we aim to be able to put a carbon footprint figure on at least one of our deliverable types for our clients. This will have a knock-on effect of assisting clients with being able to minimise and take stock of their own carbon footprints, a figure that is no easy feat to obtain but a vital part of the world's journey to Net Zero.

We are also aiming to progress with our carbon accounting to achieve a more accurate footprint and are going to continue to work on reducing our emissions, continuing our own journey to Net Zero.



Customers



What we said we would do

We said we'd continue to monitor the role of our Client Engagement Manager (CEM) and that we needed to do more for our clients. For example, improving the way we communicate with our clients and looking to develop a client portal where they will be able to track the status of their reports and have a dedicated main point of contact.

What we did

The CEM role and responsibility has increased within our business and has led to better interactions and identifying who best we serve. We are talking to our clients via calls more rather than in writing to improve our relationship with them.

We are also now finding that more of our work is being carried out in the public sector.

Although we've not yet developed a client portal, we are hoping that this is something we can move towards in the next year and know we need to do more work in this area.

We have, however, taken immense pride in boosting our social media output on LinkedIn. Articles we've issued have enabled us to highlight our company's specialisms helping clients understand just how diverse a service we can provide including for Arboriculture as well as Ecology, BNG, Green Infrastructure Assessments and surveys using our newly purchased equipment.

Two of our staff have also provided a training session on the ecological aspects of BREEAM to official BREEAM Assessors whilst gaining valuable insight into their requirements from consultants enabling us to provide our clients and the assessors with more meaningful and accurate information. Feedback from the assessors was great.

In November 2023, our Senior Arboricultural/Ecological Consultant also operated our stall at the NEC Farm Business Innovation Show providing free advice to landowners and potential clients on how we can help meet their BNG needs.

We are always looking for new ways to help our clients achieve their ecological goals and will continue to going forward.



What we're working on

Later in 2024 we plan to devise a detailed internal Project Management Course that will help our staff help our clients and plan to further train our staff on liaising with clients to do everything we can to provide a better service and experience.



Feedback

We seek constructive feedback from our clients and external stakeholders and so if you have any comments, concerns or collaborative ideas then please contact us.

Email: hello@wildwoodecology.com

We look forward to sharing our progress and news with you next year.



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