



Towards net zero

Public and private organisations alike face significant costs and challenges in doing their part to achieving zero carbon status by 2050, as the UK Government has signed up to. This is not only a CSR aspiration, it has direct impacts in respect of operations, increasingly climate-sensitive investment and in terms of reputational impact. At Shoosmiths, we take our commitment to carbon neutrality seriously, and can help our clients achieve their carbon neutral aims and milestones through our actions. Our carbon reduction agenda is ambitious, and a carbon neutral future is a key part of that.

We established a carbon neutral working group in November 2019, including our CEO, directorates and partners, and we committed at board level that our operations achieve carbon neutral status by 2025, involving a target for our operations to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2025. We have also committed to setting a science-based target through the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), this involves our commitment to set science-based emissions reduction targets across the entire value chain that are consistent with keeping global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This means that our clients can say that they select suppliers who share aligned carbon neutral goals. Our carbon neutral commitment will become embedded into our operational decision-making processes; we will engage our colleagues to identify/implement best practice and drive down Greenhouse Gas emissions.

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Shoosmiths' carbon neutral approach

Our approach is to reduce our carbon impact, purchasing carbon offsets to mitigate residual carbon emissions only when we have achieved all that we can in terms of reductions. Our priority is to concentrate on improving the quality and scope of data management and to achieve a reduction in carbon emissions associated with our business. A carbon neutral future is an exciting opportunity to show leadership and play our part in driving the changes expected of our responsible business. We have a defined carbon neutral policy, published online (here) outlining our approach, and our initiatives include:

- Sourcing renewable electricity at offices where we control energy purchasing – in addition we aim to source 100% from renewable electricity at all UK locations by 2025;
- Some of our offices are BREEAM excellent rated or are ISO:14001 accredited;
- We are considering the installation of Solar PV panels in Northampton, our largest office;
- In Belfast, Milton Keynes and London, we have installed energy efficient (LED) lighting, often with Passive Infrared (PIR) movement sensors to ensure lights are only on when needed to reduce energy demand;
- In Milton Keynes, we relocated to a smaller office at Avebury Boulevard which resulted in a 30% reduction in office space and a significant reduction in energy requirements;
- In Northampton, air conditioning is switched off at weekends to reduce energy demand, we have refurbished the toilets to include sensor taps and energy efficient hand dryers;
- In Northampton, we have introduced electric vehicle charging points in the car park to allow staff to charge electric vehicles. We also have charging points available to staff at the Milton Keynes office;
- Reducing travel emissions through agile working, reinforced by IT solutions, interest free loans for rail/bus season tickets and supporting the Cycle to Work scheme. Post COVID, we are now a mainly home-based firm and have taken the opportunity to review our travel policy to reinforce virtual/remote working;
- We donated £17k to a Woodland Trust woodland project and we have donated all used IT equipment since 2008 to Computer Aid International, who help disadvantaged parties access IT equipment;
- Increasing recycling solutions, including phasing out single use plastic. We use recycled stationery where we can and our copier paper is Forest Stewardship Council certified. Shoosmiths sourced c.1,025 stationery items in 2018/2019 of which 225 had a defined environmental benefit and of which 29 products were 100% recycled;
- Rationalisation of our printing infrastructure in 2015/2016 (with the associated aim of reducing the number of printers by c.50%) and the introduction of more energy efficient and “follow me” printing solutions resulted in printed sheets consumption reducing by 28% from 43 million to 31 million sheets. During 2016/2017 printed sheets consumption reduced by a further 8% to 28 million pages and during 2017/2018 consumption reduced by a further 1.8% to 27.5 million pages. Printers are set for double sided and black and white printing as default;
- All confidential waste is sent for shredding where the shreds are then made into various consumer products (144.34 tonnes in 2018/2019 collected and recycled into 169.8 tonnes of recycled fibre, avoiding 424.5 m3 of landfill space. We encourage the use of cups, glasses and dishwashers, rather than disposable cups; and
- Re-usable glass bottles used for on-site purified water using EcoPure Waters supplier. In 2018/2019 we consumed 23,314 litres of water in this way and avoided 4.21 tonnes of glass needing to be recycled or disposed of.

Our environmental policy statement defines our environmental vision and our CEO takes overall responsibility for this. We have a dedicated Head of Corporate Responsibility and an environmental management system (EMS) based on the principles of the ISO:14001 standard, reviewed annually. We also undertake 2nd party environmental audits of our offices annually. We publicly report on our environmental targets and performance in our annual CR reports and United Nations Global Compact Reports (of which we have been a signatory since 2016).

An incident reporting system covers environmental incidents. We also train and encourage our staff to speak and think about environmental awareness. We also host comprehensive CR pages on our intranet for our colleagues. Our focus is to encourage understanding of our environmental impacts and to provide opportunities to mitigate those impacts.

Our network of environmental champions focus on increasing recycling solutions, replacing single use plastic with reusable plastic or other materials, running staff awareness raising campaigns and working with suppliers to introduce more sustainable solutions..



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Carbon neutral – early and significant signs of progress:

In 2019/2020, versus 2018/19, we achieved a 23% reduction in our carbon footprint because of our efforts. Our first carbon neutral working group meeting took place on 22 November 2019 and explored carbon neutral trends and thinking, potential technological/operational opportunities in energy, transport, refrigeration, waste management, and the importance of staff engagement.

Looking beyond Shoosmiths, working with our stakeholders

Our approach is holistic, looking outward, not just inward. We work with stakeholders including our suppliers to identify opportunities to reduce environmental impacts and we have a culture of supporting communities. Some of our support and encouragement initiatives with like-minded and progressive partners includes:

- Our membership of the Law Society's Legal Sustainability Alliance (LSA);
- Our signatory status to various leading initiatives. In January 2020, Shoosmiths became a signatory to the LSA's Legal Renewables Initiative, launched by the LSA, this commits signatories to switch all UK offices and premises to electricity from certified 100% renewable electricity sources by 2025. We were the first law firm to become a signatory to the One Planet Pledge and we are also signatories to other environmental campaigns, such as Reading Climate Change Action Network, Manchester: A Certain Future and the Business in the Community's Challenge 2030 campaign;
- Publishing CR related stories on our CR blog, SHOUTback, to raise awareness of environmental and other CR related activities such as volunteering, fundraising, environmental awareness campaigns and pro bono;
- Volunteering, which is encouraged with a number of opportunities publicised on our intranet and those supporting environmental charities are particularly highlighted;
- Establishing environmental champion networks in offices to increase streams of waste recycled, raise staff awareness, identify opportunities to replace single-use plastic with either re-usable plastic or other materials, and explore opportunities to use more sustainable refreshment options for client facing meetings; and
- Running staff awareness campaigns at local and national levels. In October 2019, we organised a Shoosmiths Earth Week, including a carbon neutral-focused day. Our intranet landing pages featured daily interviews with our CEO, chairman and HR Director. We have participated, each March since 2012, in the World Wildlife Fund co-ordinated Earth Hour campaign.

The demonstrable benefits this brings to our clients

The importance of delivering on social value priorities, including carbon neutrality, is not just something of benefit to law firms, it is becoming an increasingly important policy and revenue driver in the UK. As an example, the Cabinet Office announced in October 2020 that central government departments will evaluate bids for work based on the social value they can provide, with a minimum 10% weighting.

Given the UK government's recent announcement of an ambitious target to reduce the UK's emissions by at least 68% by 2030, we appreciate that our clients will be under unprecedented pressure to adapt, and we can help.

At Shoosmiths, appointing what will soon be a carbon neutral trusted advisor could be a first step that not only helps with your overall ESG reporting, but brings a progressive mindset to the table.

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