SK Designs

2025

Sustainability Report

Sustainability has been central to our design ethos for several years now, but this is our first year of publishing an SK Designs Sustainability Report. It's a chance for us to bring together the work we are doing as a company to reduce the footprint of our business, and also showcase the sustainable building projects we have been involved in this year.

From trialling low-carbon materials and strengthening our supply chain, to designing award-winning projects like Goldsmith Street, we've taken meaningful steps to embed sustainability into every part of our practice. This report is just one way of holding ourselves accountable and learning as we go.

We believe that as the years go by, our sustainability journey will continue to evolve - as a business and as an industry.

Samantha Krellots

Founder, SK Designs

2025 Highlights

Over the past year, we've trialled a range of **low-carbon materials** across live projects, testing their performance, durability and embodied carbon in real-world conditions. This hands-on approach continues to strengthen our position as a practice with sustainability at its core. We also achieved certification for **ISO 14001:2015**, giving us a robust framework to monitor, measure and improve our environmental performance over time.

We were proud to lead the design of Goldsmith Street, winner of the Large Projects category at the **2025 Exemplar Sustainable Building Awards**. Over the past year, we also delivered two projects rated **BREEAM Excellent** and achieved full **Passivhaus certification** on a project, a notable milestone for our practice.

Internally, we completed a **full review of our supply chain partners** to align them with sustainable best practices and ethical sourcing standards. We also deepened our relationships with local suppliers, especially those working with reused or reclaimed materials, to help embed circular thinking into every stage of our design process.

Our contribution to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) icons appear throughout our impact report to showcase how our sustainability initiatives align with global priorities. These icons provide a clear, recognisable framework for addressing critical issues like climate action, responsible production, and social equity, demonstrating our contributions to these shared goals.

Our approach is informed by industry guidance, including the RIBA Sustainable Outcomes Guide and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. These provide a shared language and framework for aligning client ambitions with wider priorities such as affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), sustainable communities (SDG 11), and responsible consumption and production (SDG 12).

Our Design Choices

As architects, the way in which we design has far-reaching consequences. This means we have a responsibility to reduce the environmental impact of the built environment and to design spaces that support both people and the planet. We are lucky that many of our clients feel the same.

Our operational footprint is only part of the picture. Our real impact lies in the performance, resilience and carbon footprint of the buildings we design. Therefore, reducing embodied carbon is a key part of our design approach, from minimising structural loads to specifying materials with recycled content or lower-impact manufacturing processes.

Naturally, this comes with challenges. Upfront costs, design complexity and competing priorities all need to be balanced with budget and broader business goals. But this is also where the opportunity lies. We've found that sustainability can be framed as a strategic decision, delivering long-term value, from improved performance and occupant wellbeing to stronger compliance and reputation.

With the right partnerships, we believe every project has the potential to contribute to a more equitable, low-carbon future.

Environment: Emissions

36% total emissions reduction

compared to 2019 baseline

As an architecture practice, we recognise that both our business operations and our design decisions carry an environmental impact. We are committed to reducing that impact through careful material choices, energy-efficient studio practices and low-carbon design approaches across our projects.

As part of our sustainability journey, we have invested in three projects that remove carbon dioxide (CO_2) from the atmosphere or avoid further emissions. We are supporting work on forest creation and protection, solar power and peatland restoration. While these have a positive impact on global warming, under the GHG Protocol we are not including these reductions as part of our calculations.

SK Designs commits to reach Net Zero by

2030

13 CLIMATE ACTION

Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions

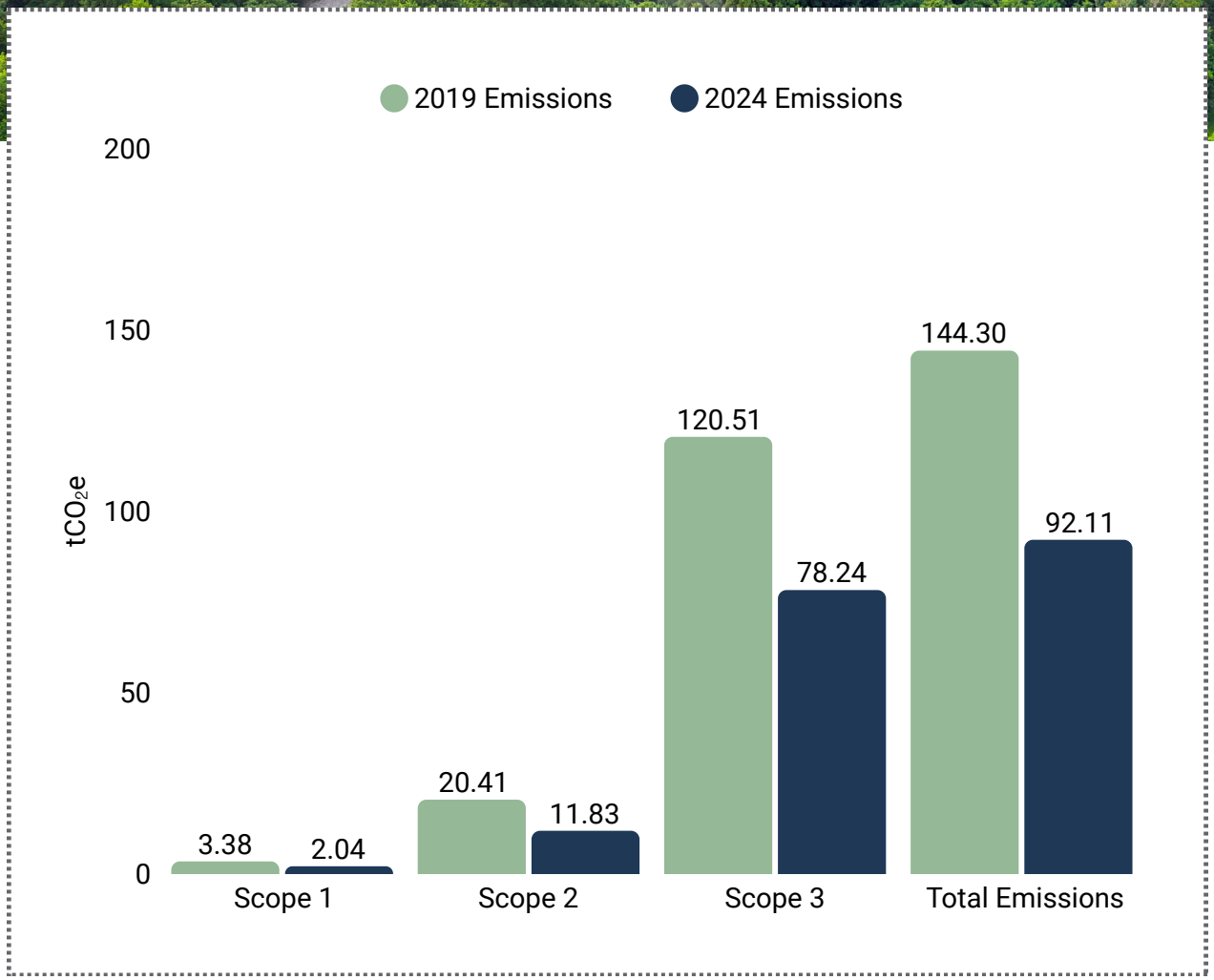
We track our Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions in line with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol.

Scope 1 covers direct emissions, primarily from our company-owned vehicles. **Scope 2** refers to the electricity used in our studio, which is sourced from a 100% renewable supplier. **Scope 3** includes a broader range of indirect emissions, including commuting, business travel, supply chain activities and waste.

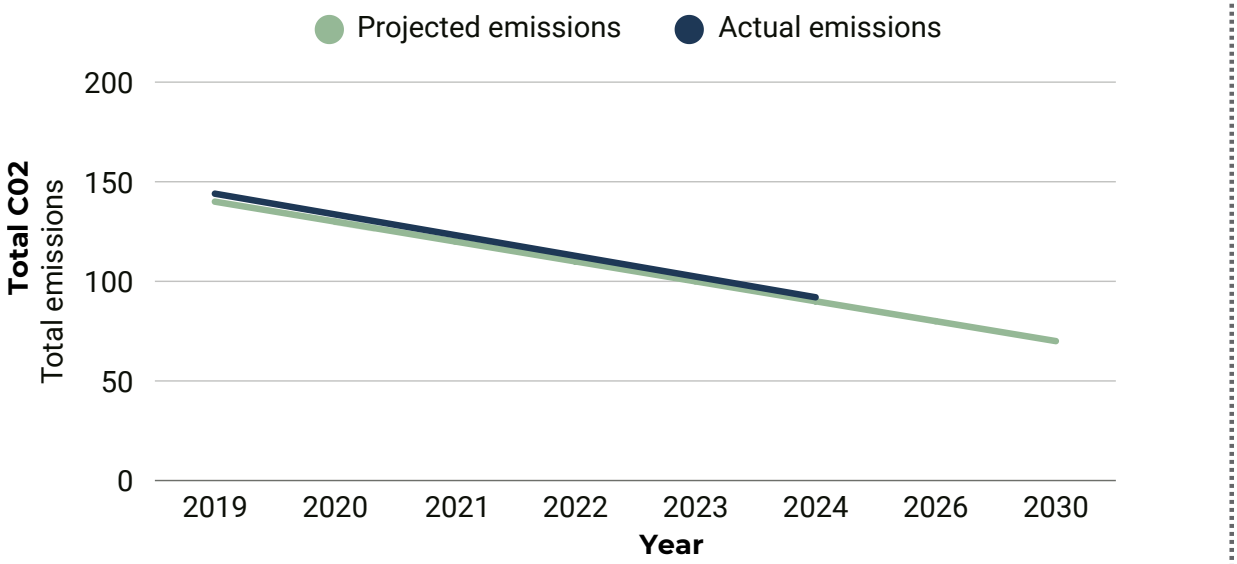
Category	Detail	2019 Emissions (tCO_2e)	2024 Emissions (tCO_2e)
Scope 1	Purchased Gas	3.38	2.04
Scope 2	Purchased Electricity for Building (100% renewable)		11.08
	Purchased Electricity for EVs		0.75
Subtotal Scope 2		**20.41**	**11.83**
Scope 3	Employee Commuting		39.06
	Water Supply		0.06
	Water Treatment		0.11
	Upstream Transportation and Distribution		2.81
	Waste Generated in Operations		26.77
	Business Travel		4.01
	Downstream Transportation and Distribution		0.00*
	Remote Working (electricity, T&D, heating)		5.39
	Website		0.03
Subtotal Scope 3		**120.51**	**78.24**
Total Emmissions		**144.3**	**92.11**

**not relevant*

Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions



Carbon Reduction Progress



SCOPE 1

40%

reduction

SCOPE 2

42%

reduction

SCOPE 3

35%

reduction

Our baseline year is 2019. Since then, we have **reduced our total emissions by 36%**, despite growing the team and taking on more projects. We now have a more complete understanding of our emissions profile, particularly Scope 3, and this is helping us to target reductions more effectively as we work towards our 2030 goal.

We are confident in our ability to reach net zero by 2030. Our trajectory continues to trend downwards, and we have plans in place to further reduce our Scope 3 emissions next year.

To reduce Scope 3 emissions from commuting, we're focusing on **behaviour change** and **low-emission travel** options. We've introduced a cycle-to-work scheme to support this shift and are exploring incentives for lower-emission commuting.
For company vehicles, we're phasing in electric alternatives to cut emissions from business travel, with a full transition planned over the next two years.

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Case Study: Blackburn Street

Blackburn Street, winner of the 2025 Exemplar Sustainable Building Award (Large Projects), is a landmark in climate-positive design. This 93-home Passivhaus scheme combines **ultra-low energy use** with **high-quality, affordable living**. Annual energy bills are as low as £150 per home, demonstrating one of the primary benefits of low-carbon living. The homes are arranged around terraces to prioritise natural light, community connection and long-term thermal performance.

Built with a hybrid MMC timber frame and guided by a fabric-first approach, this **significantly reduces both operational and embodied carbon**. We were proud that not only did the project meet rigorous Passivhaus standards but proved that public housing can lead the way in climate-resilient construction, without compromising on beauty, cost-efficiency or social impact.

- **Certifications:** Passivhaus (April 2024)
- **Annual running costs:** £150 per unit/year (of which standing charge £90) Approx. £2/m^2/yr
- **Heat source:** Gas
- **Overall Energy demand:** 38 kWh/m^2/yr
- **Embodied carbon:** 311 $kgCO_2e/m^2$ (A1–A5)
- **Construction:** Hybrid timber frame with brick/tile cladding, Warmcel insulation

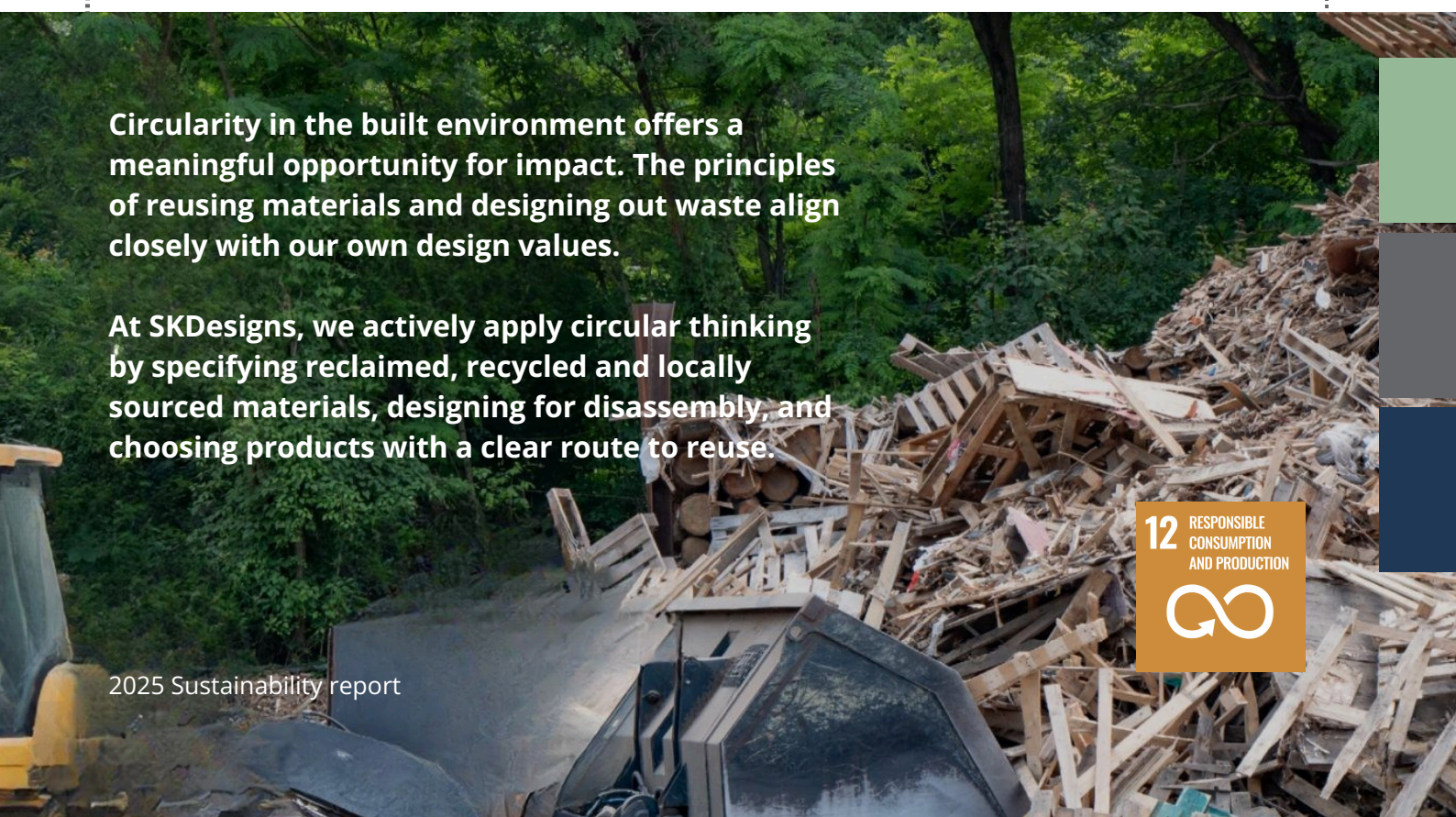
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Environment: Circularity

Case study: Kronospan P5 particleboard

In one of our recent projects, we specified Kronospan's P5 particleboard, manufactured at their Chirk plant in North Wales using up to **90% recycled wood**. This high-performance panel is made from post-consumer timber collected across the UK — materials that would otherwise be landfilled or incinerated. By choosing this product, we were able to support circular manufacturing and significantly **reduce embodied carbon** without compromising on quality or performance.

- Advanced cleaning and separation processes ensure material quality
- Uses sawmill residue and non-recyclable timber to generate on-site heat and power
- Supports carbon reduction and material reuse targets
- Minimal transport requirements reduces logistics-related emissions
- Aligned with our design goals around transparency, local sourcing and low-impact construction



Circularity in the built environment offers a meaningful opportunity for impact. The principles of reusing materials and designing out waste align closely with our own design values.

At SKDesigns, we actively apply circular thinking by specifying reclaimed, recycled and locally sourced materials, designing for disassembly, and choosing products with a clear route to reuse.

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Sustainability Certifications

Passivhaus

Our first fully certified Passivhaus project set a new benchmark for energy performance and comfort. Designed to rigorous standards, the building achieves exceptional airtightness and low operational energy use, delivering a healthier, more efficient space for its occupants.

LETI-aligned

We actively design to meet LETI targets for embodied and operational carbon, aligning each project with industry benchmarks for low-energy, climate-conscious buildings. This helps future-proof our designs and reduce their environmental footprint.

BREEAM Excellent

We're proud to have delivered multiple projects rated BREEAM Excellent, reflecting our commitment to sustainable design, responsible construction and long-term performance. These buildings meet high standards in energy, water, materials, ecology and health.

ISO 14001 certified

As a practice, we are ISO 14001 certified, which means our internal processes are set up to continually monitor and improve our environmental performance — from office operations to project delivery

Environment: Nature

Protecting and working with nature is an increasingly important part of how we design.

Green infrastructure brings multiple benefits, from **cleaner air** to **improved mental wellbeing**. These natural features can also reduce environmental impacts, helping to manage water, regulate temperature and support local wildlife. For us, it's not just about adding green space, it's about shaping buildings and places that contribute positively to their surroundings.

78%

of timber products FSC or PEFC certified

42%

of designs incorporated features that promote biodiversity

100%

of major sites received ecological assessments

2

pro bono consultancy sessions for a local urban rewilding project

Case Study:
Swift Hollow Barn, Yorkshire

Swift Hollow Barn is a unique renovation project in rural Yorkshire, designed with biodiversity in mind from the earliest stages. The conversion of the existing structure presented an opportunity to incorporate architectural features that actively support local wildlife, without compromising the simplicity and clarity of the design.

To mitigate any loss of habitat during construction, we integrated swift bricks, bat boxes and a dedicated barn owl loft discreetly within the building envelope. These features are designed into the fabric of the barn - not added on - preserving the visual integrity of the elevations while creating genuine ecological value. The owl loft sits above the ceiling line, making use of otherwise unoccupied volume in the pitched roof.

We also reimagined the chimney, no longer required for heating, as a 'biodiversity stack', a vertical structure that offers nesting cavities and insect habitats while echoing the form of traditional farmstead chimneys.

These elements demonstrate how architecture can quietly **support biodiversity** when it's considered as part of the core design, not a retrofit gesture.

Interview

Alex Morgan, Elemental Structures

We spoke to Alex Morgan of Elemental Structures to discuss the importance of collaboration in sustainability.

You've worked with us on a number of projects. What made these stand out from a sustainability perspective?

We started with a fabric-first mindset, looking at how the structure itself could do the heavy lifting — literally and thermally. Using circular materials like recycled timber panels helped us reduce embodied carbon without compromising performance.

How important was early collaboration?

Crucial. Being involved from the outset meant we could challenge assumptions together — do we need steel here? Can this be modular? That kind of dialogue made the difference between 'low energy' and genuinely low carbon.

Have you used any post-occupancy data?

Yes, we've review early POE feedback. Not only has it helped validate our decisions on insulation levels and ventilation, it's given us useful insight for future specs.

Any lessons learned?

While certification is rigorous, targets like Passivhaus or LETI aren't barriers, they're tools. They keep everyone focused on performance, not just compliance, and ultimately lead to better buildings.

Social Employees

In 2024, our gender equality data shows that women make up:

48%
of our total workforce

36%
of our executive team

17%
above industry average

16%
above industry average

As a female-founded business, we're committed to helping create an industry where women are supported, represented and able to thrive at every level. In 2025, we will apply this approach to increase the diversity and inclusion of our workforce.

Mental Health and Flexibility Baselines

We've established internal baselines to track uptake and feedback on our mental health support and flexible working arrangements. These are reviewed annually to identify where additional resources or adjustments may be needed.

Menopause policy

We have introduced a Menopause Policy to support staff experiencing symptoms, with clear guidance on adjustments and open access to support. This is part of our broader commitment to an inclusive and understanding workplace.

5 GENDER EQUALITY

GRI Content Index

Environmental data

Emissions have been reported and recorded in accordance with the published reporting standard for Carbon Reduction Plans and the GHG Reporting Protocol corporate standard, and uses the appropriate Government emission conversion factors for greenhouse gas company reporting. Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions have been reported in accordance with SECR requirements, and the required subset of Scope 3 emissions have been reported in accordance with the published reporting standard for Carbon Reduction plans and the Corporate Value Chain (Scope 3) Standard.

Statement of use: SK Designs has reported the information cited in this GRI content index for the period January 2024 to December 2024 with reference to the GRI Standards.

GRI 1 used	GR1: Foundation 2021	
GRI Standard	**Disclosure**	**Location**
GRI 1 302: Energy 2016	302-1 Energy consumption within the organization	p.6
	302-2 Energy consumption outside of the organization	p.6
	302-3 Energy intensity	*
	302-4 Reduction of energy consumption	p.7
	302-5 Reduction of energy requirements of products and services	**
GRI 305: Emissions 2016	305-1 Direct (Scope 1) GHG emissions	p.7
	305-2 Energy indirect (Scope 2) GHG emissions	p.7
	305-3 Other indirect (Scope 3) GHG emissions	p.7
	305-4 GHG emissions intensity	*
	305-5 Reduction of GHG emissions	p.8
	305-6 Emissions of ozone-depleting substances	*
	305-7 Nitrogen oxides (NOx), sulfur oxides (SOx), and other significant air emissions	*

**we do not currently measure this, but intend to in next year's report*
***we do not measure this*

The content of this publication has not been approved by the United Nations and does not reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials or Member States.

Jan 2024 - Dec 2024

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Compiled using ImpactIO framework,
Brace For Impact Ltd

To turn tell SK Design's sustainability story in a way that was clear, credible and commercially useful, we:

- Organised complex environmental actions in a format readers can understand quickly.
- Showcased relevant projects and building methods within each impact area.
- Turned raw operational data into a concise narrative about progress and impact.
- Used our Brace For Impact Sustainability Report template so the budget could be focused elsewhere.
- Built in natural opportunities for visual storytelling through statistics, icons and charts.
- Ensured the structure supports annual updates without major rework.

We avoided greenwashing by:

- Linking every sustainability statement to a real action or measurable change.
- Aligning the impact areas with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and reported in reference to GRI Standards.
- Working with data that can be updated each year.
- Keeping all claims aligned with recognised good practice in sustainability reporting.

Ready to do the same for your business? Get in touch.