

# Annual Report

**WHOLEGRAIN**  
digital

# Explore our Annual Report

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Our mission is to create the best websites in the world, use our business as a force for good, and help to accelerate the shift to an Internet that's good for people and planet.

# How will we achieve our goals?

To prove that sustainable - and profitable - business is possible, we work towards measurable goals, all of which fall under our four pillars:

## 01.

### Operations

Constantly pushing ourselves to find ways of operating our business that are better for society and the environment.

## 02.

### Clients

Helping positive organisations use design and technology to achieve their goals and benefit society.

## 03.

### Team culture

Creating a model of work that best serves our needs as human beings within the constraints of our modern society.

## 04.

### Digital Sustainability

Pioneering best practices in sustainable web design and inspiring organisations to adopt them.

# It's been another positive year for us, as we passed 16 years of Wholegrain Digital!

It has been a year of growth, as we've begun to substantially grow our team, and have enjoyed working with many new purpose-led organisations. We didn't meet our goal of surpassing last year's income but we're pleased that, despite increased business costs in many areas, we managed to maintain the same turnover as last year.

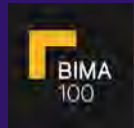
We have also continued to deliver on our core mission, achieving the environmental goals we set ourselves last year, and receiving recognition for our work both internally - for our work developing our team - and externally, winning awards for our contribution to greening the web and championing sustainable business practices.

We're excited as always to share our successes with you, as well as reviewing where we can improve and setting our goals for the year ahead.



# Award winning work!

The 2022/23 financial year was a multiple award-winning year for Wholegrain Digital! We were recognised by:



## BIMA 100

Our Co-Founder, Tom Greenwood, was recognised in the Champions for Change category.



## Escape the City

Wholegrain Digital was recognised in the 'Escape 100' as one of the top organisations to escape to in 2022.



## HRZone's Culture Pioneers

We were recognised for our work, led by our Team Coach, in supporting our team's development.



## Digital Leaders

Tom was recognised in 2022's inaugural Net Zero 50 list, recognising his passion for sustainable business and willingness to openly share lessons learned along the way.

# Being a B Corp

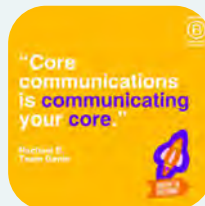
This year we've been busy preparing for recertification in May, and we're almost there with this, hoping to achieve an improved score again thanks to our increased efforts to improve in all areas.

The best thing about being a B Corp for us has always been the community, and we've enjoyed meeting lots of new friends and deepening existing relationships this year.



During B Corp Month 2023, we've enjoyed collaborating with Australian Marketing Agency [Harvey](#), on their fantastic [Supplier Impact](#) campaign, which encourages all businesses to review their supply chains to ensure it's as ethical and sustainable as possible.

We also collaborated with long-term friends at Enviral, with our co-founder Vineeta recording a podcast with Enviral founder Joss Ford for their [Shifting the Narrative](#) podcast, and our communications experts Rachael (Wholegrain) and Bonnie (Enviral) sharing [tips on B Corp comms](#) with the community.



# 1% for the Planet partners

This year we decided to do something completely different for one of our 1% for the Planet partnerships, teaming up with a smaller partner who could make a real difference to its local community.

We supported community interest company (CIC), Rise Up. Clean Up. Margate, for their week-long, live mural project in September 2022. Involving 17 invited artists, who were filmed across the week, this climate conscious collective created public art as a means of raising awareness of ocean conservation and the issues caused by plastic in and near our oceans.



Photo by  
Ben Driftwood

Our second new 1% for the Planet partner for 2022/23 is Renewable World, who work with communities living in difficult to reach and low-income areas around the world, to ensure they have access to affordable, renewable energy solutions.





# Our ongoing charity partnerships include:



Trees for Life



Eden Reforestation Projects

# Income impact

Despite increased business costs in many areas, we managed to maintain the same turnover as last year. We hope to surpass this in the coming financial year.



90

The number of clients we worked with this year, of which:

23

were purpose led businesses

(of which 9 were B Corporations)

18

were public sector organisations

20

were regular

(not identified as purpose driven)

29

were charities



83.3% of our revenue came from client projects that have a defined positive purpose beyond financial profit.

#### Revenue breakdown:

15.5% from public sector projects

30.5% from purpose driven businesses (including 10% from B Corps)

15.2% from projects not specifically mission aligned

36.5% from charities/non-profit organisations and;

2.3% from digital Sustainability consulting

# Digital Sustainability

All of our measurable goals relating to digital sustainability fall under our commitment to the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on SDG-13 - Climate Action.

Reducing our impact

Reducing our emissions

Influencing industry

Greening the web

**13** CLIMATE ACTION



**Take urgent actions to combat climate change and its impacts**

Our total carbon  
emissions for 2022-23  
= 27.7 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e.

# Reducing our impact

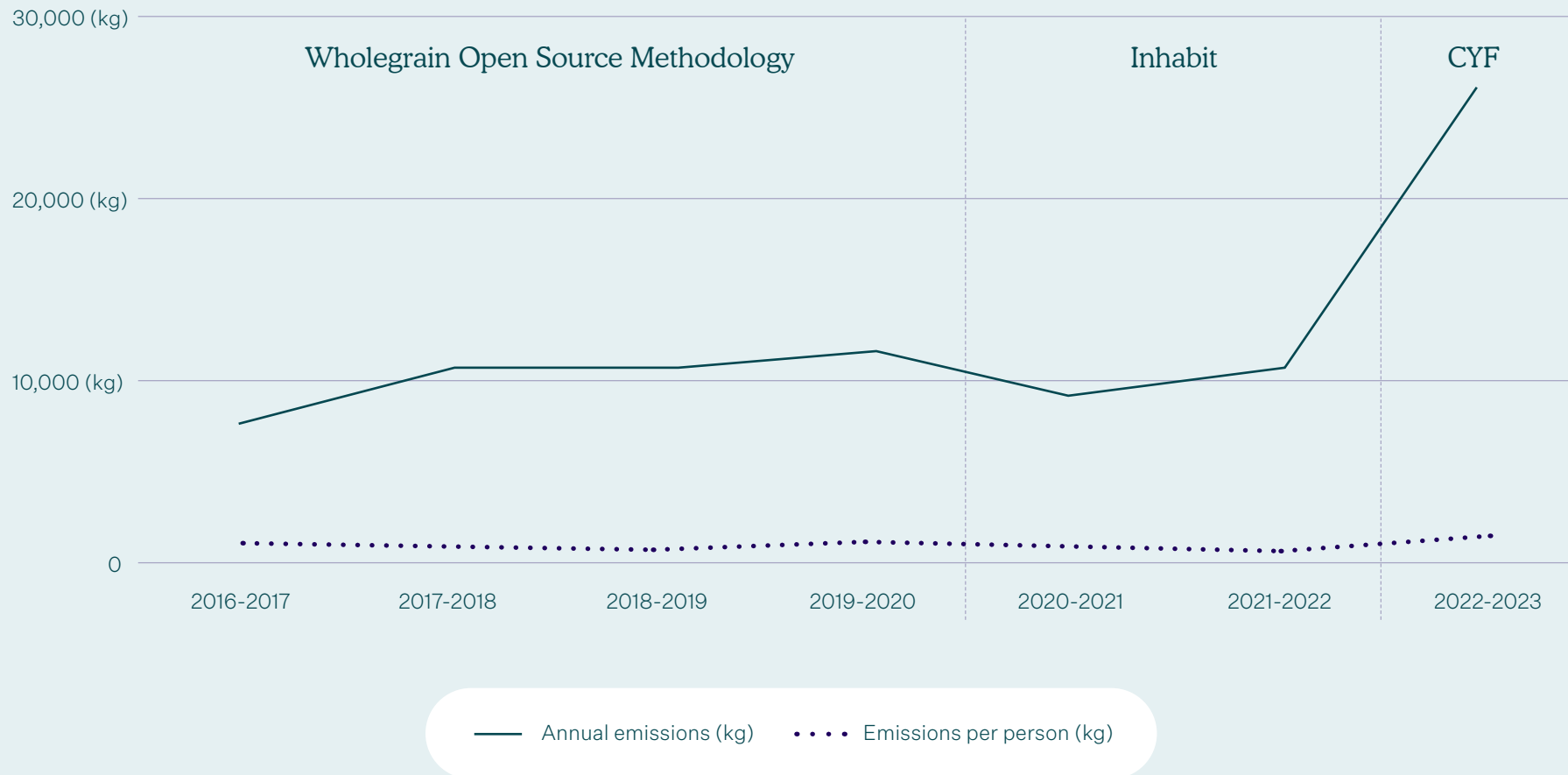
We initially achieved our goals of becoming a carbon positive business at the end of the 2020-21 financial year. However, as we were working on expanding our definition of Scope 3 emissions, we could only accurately make this claim across Scopes 1 and 2.

Compared to the 2021-22 financial year, for which we calculated our emissions as **11.3 tonnes**, it seems as though our footprint has more than doubled.

However, this is not the case. As we've mentioned in [previous reports](#), we have been seeking to expand our definition of scope 3 emissions, ensuring that this is as robust as possible. To achieve this, we switched to using [Compare Your Footprint](#), a carbon accounting software developed by fellow B Corp, [Green Element](#).

Switching tools for carbon accounting always highlights the challenge of calculating carbon emissions, as the data never perfectly maps between tools and it can be hard to do 'like for like' comparisons between years. This is very evident for the 2022-23 period because the new approach gives us a more complete picture of our Scope 3 emissions, which naturally means that we are reporting higher emissions.

So, although if we compare year on year it looks like our emissions have more than doubled, what the figures actually mean is that we now have a more accurate picture of our emissions, which we can use to set new targets for the year ahead.

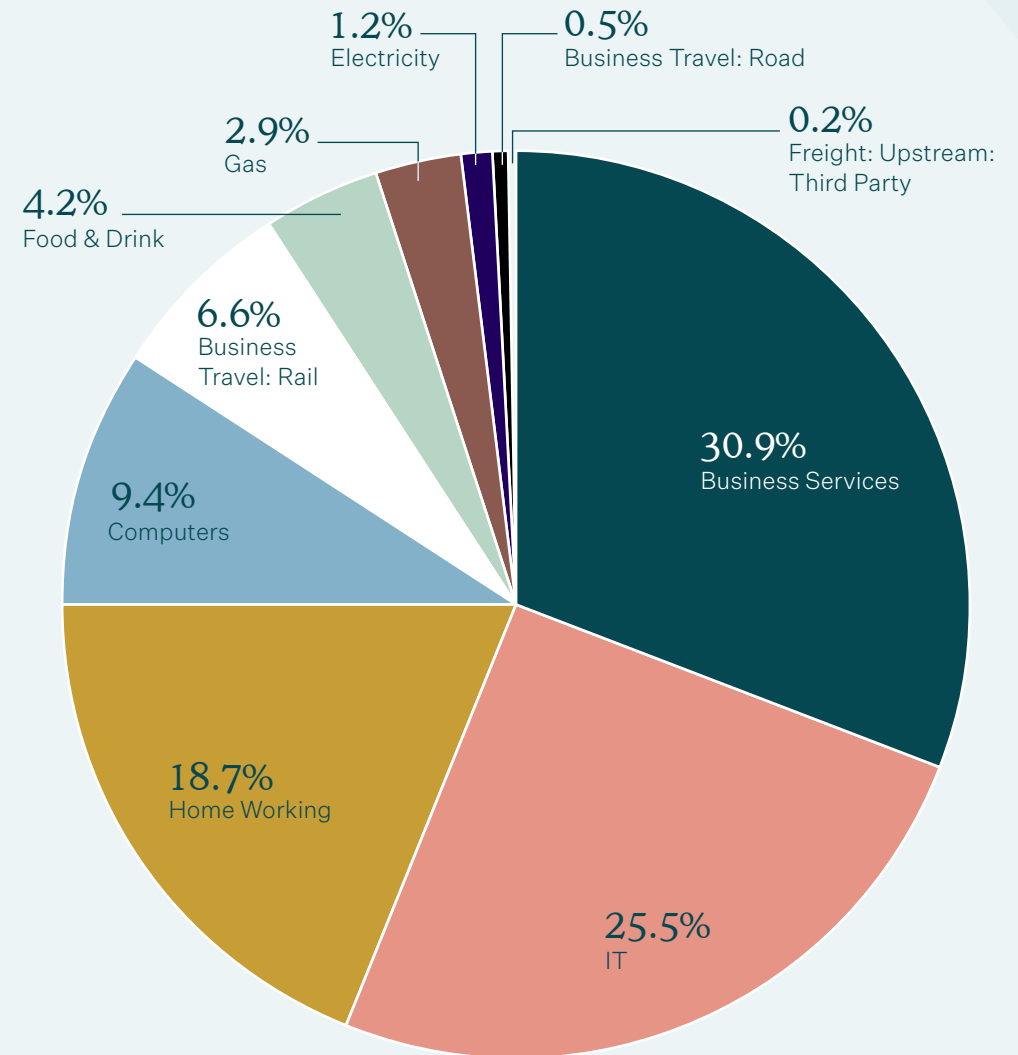


# Emissions by Source

A third of our emissions (30.9%) come from business services. This includes things such as accountancy and legal services to support the business.

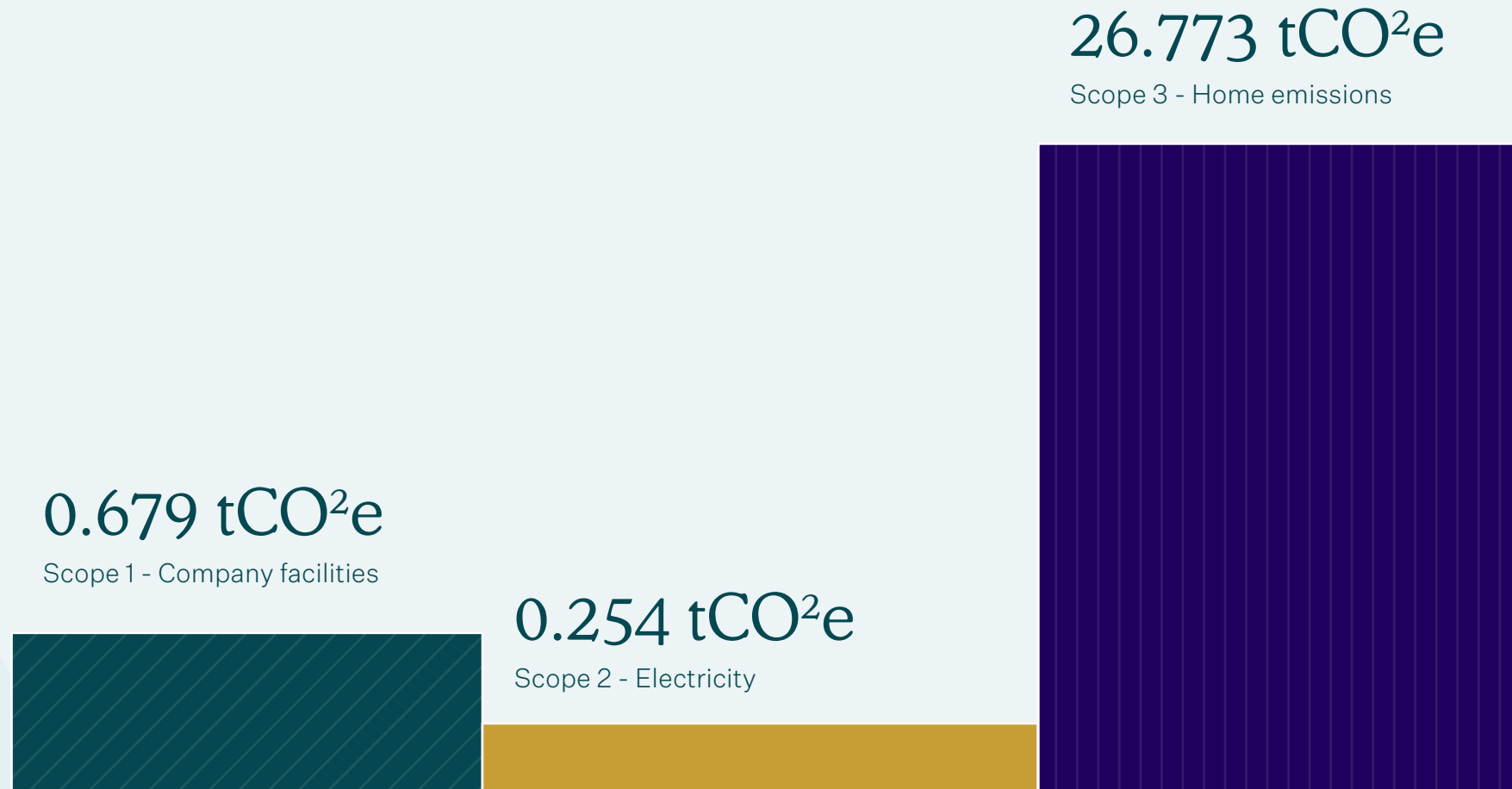
A quarter of our emissions (25.5%) come from the IT category - the necessary use of software to process data, and our telephone systems.

A large proportion (almost 19%) of our emissions come from the (currently) unavoidable use of gas to heat the building in which we work (both our London office and our team's homes, all buildings that we do not own).



# Emissions by Scope

These figures include all three emissions scopes, with the majority of our emissions falling in Scope 3, which is the most significant for any service organisation, particularly those delivering digital services.





14,194

## trees planted this year!

For this year, we continued with our carbon syncing approach to offsetting our emissions. We planted 14,194 trees, bringing our total number of trees planted to around 60,000.

We've added to our tree purchasing approach this year, further reducing our impact by buying certified carbon removal credits in the form of [Treeconomy's](#) Akron Mixed Afforestation project in Scotland.

Looking ahead to 2023/24 financial year, we are looking to take a more blended approach to neutralising our unavoidable carbon emissions.



# Connecting our clients with our mission

Our target for the carbon emissions of all new websites that we create has been to be less than the industry average. As we are consistently achieving this goal, we are looking to improve further in the coming 2023-24 financial year.

This year, our average client website homepage remains consistent with last year, at 0.4g CO<sub>2</sub> (using Website Carbon v3 methodology). While we're pleased that this remained consistent, we're ready to create a stretch goal to improve in the coming year, as we know we can do even better.

100%

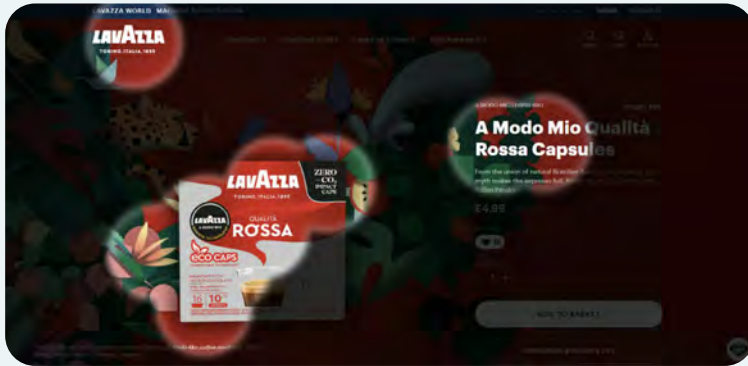
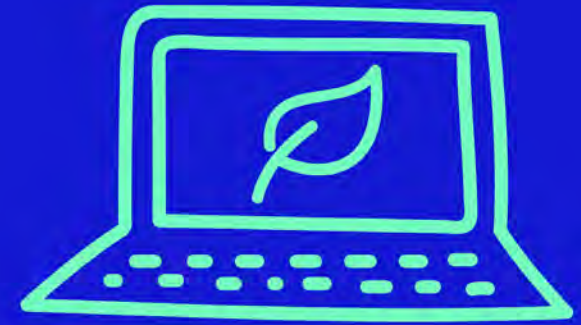
Of our own websites are hosted on green hosting

96%

Of our client's websites are hosted with green hosting providers

(compared with 78% in 2021-22)

# Digital sustainability services



To understand Lavazza’s website’s environmental impact, we performed a comprehensive Website Carbon Audit

Our increased focus on our new Digital Sustainability services is seeing results, with several high profile businesses making use of our consultancy services.

This year, we consulted with Italian coffee company [Lavazza](#), not only helping them by reviewing their website for high impact website pages, and giving recommendations to reduce their digital footprint, but also helping their senior leadership team to create a presentation that would help them raise awareness of digital sustainability with other local businesses and organisations.

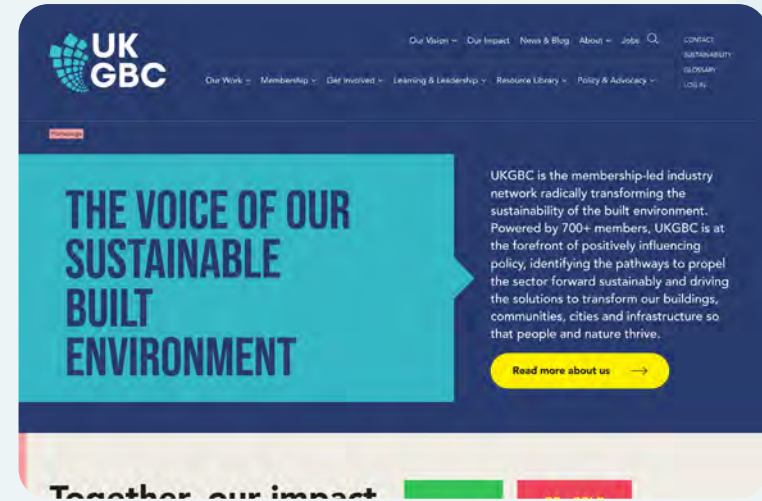
We also worked with the UK Green Building Council, for whom we went on to develop their new superlite website.

94%

Cleaner than the previous version!

While sustainability is always a priority in every project, our work with UKGBC was the first project led by our Digital Sustainability Lead, Marketa, with our Digital Sustainability services front and centre before we even began, starting with a UKGBC specific presentation to highlight the benefits of taking this approach.

Ensuring Digital Sustainability was front and centre from the start of this project led to a drastic reduction in UKGBC's digital emissions, with an estimated average carbon footprint of just 0.1g CO2 per page view, making it 94% cleaner than the previous version!



We processed the images to have a pixellated look, we also reduced the weight of the imagery so images across the entire website are approximately 95% smaller than the previous site!

# Influencing industry

We aim to be leaders in our field, encouraging others to be mindful of digital sustainability.

We also aim to have a wider impact - leading on sustainable business practices. To achieve this, we share our successes, best practices (always open source) and learnings as widely as possible through a variety of mediums, including:



Curiously  
Green



Publishing  
and events



Website  
Carbon



Humane  
Web

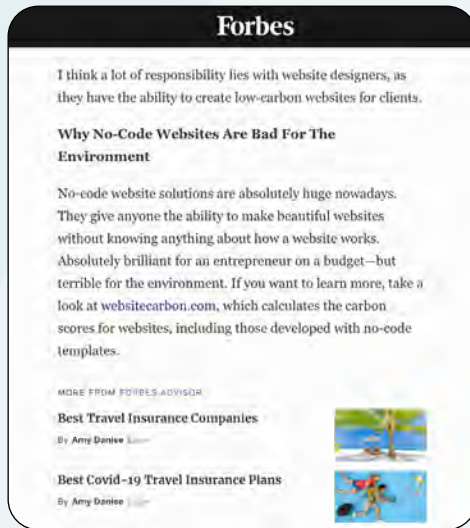
1,800+

## new subscribers in 2022/2023!

Our sustainability focused newsletter, Curiously Green, continues to show consistent growth year on year since its launch in 2019.

Every month we clean-up our email list, removing old email addresses and any bounce-backs, and this publication still continues to grow, attracting over 100 new subscribers every month.

During the 2022/23 financial year, our Curiously Green community grew by 1,800+ new subscribers, to 5,540+ (as at March 2023).



## Publishing and events

This year, we published several articles on environmental topics as well as several articles on various topics including the [social and environmental impact of AI](#). Our work around digital sustainability has been featured widely in various publications including [The Drum](#), [Dense Discovery newsletter](#), [Forbes magazine](#) and even [Reader's Digest](#).



## Events

Our influence as leaders in the digital sustainability arena is increasing, and with it, we've received an increasing number of invitations to share our expertise at events across the UK and Europe.

This year, our team has talked at events including WordCamp Netherlands and The International Green Digital Accessibility conference. We have also spoken at Falmouth and Cambridge Universities and shared our knowledge to create a sustainable web design guide for Cambridge University Press.

# Website Carbon

Since we first launched the Website Carbon Calculator in 2018, it has completed several million tests and seen two iterations. This year, to coincide with Earth Day 2022, we launched version 3.

This launch is not just more up to date in terms of the research behind it, but, having partnered with industry leaders Mightybytes, environmental consultant Rym Baouendi, web performance and environmental app EcoPing and The Green Web Foundation to collaborate on a standardised public methodology, it also represents a step towards standardisation in our industry.





# The Humane Web

Towards the end of 2022, we ran a survey to help us improve Website Carbon as part of our continuous improvement work. The results have really helped to focus our work, and we are now working on improvements based on these results.

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Although the survey questions were focused on the design and functionality of Website Carbon, it occurred to us that we could also explore how we can begin to work towards our longer-term priority of accelerating the creation of a more humane web.

The thing is, what does a Humane Web actually look/feel/sound like? The answer, of course, won't be the same for everyone, but it's something we're keen to explore in more detail.

Starting with a question we posed to our Curiously Green readers about what it meant to them, which resulted in some fascinating responses, we're now digging deeper into this topic and we're excited to share more in the coming year!



# Growing together

This year, our commitment to focusing on our teams' development continues to pay off, both in its reflection in our collaborative team culture and how this is reflected outwardly, being recognised as 'Culture Pioneers' by HR Zone, for our work in this area.



# Taking care of our mental health

Try Spill out!

As well as the amazing work our team coach, Chris, does to support the team's growth, this year we also invested in employee mental health organisation, [Spill](#). Registered with the [BACP](#), the UK's leading counselling body, they offer counselling and therapy sessions, mental health training for managers and regular check-ins on how your team is feeling, so that you can spot issues and offer immediate support.

This investment has already paid off, with [Spill recognising us as being in the top 25](#) out of the 600+ companies currently using Spill to support employee well-being.



Top 25 of 600+ companies using Spill to support employee well-being

# Team trips

As a predominately remote team, we often miss out on having time together in person to further deepen our working relationships. This year, the team, motivated by a desire to nurture these friendships and build on international professional relationships, organised a working trip to Antwerp, where we also spent half a day with local agency Statik, who hosted a sustainable web development conference while we were there.



“

“By far my favourite thing about the trip was the sense of connection I felt with everyone in spending real quality time together and having a really special shared experience.”

“I loved spending unstructured, unpressured time with the team.”

“It was fascinating to see how different types of ‘thinkers’ see the world – outside of just how they do their job.”

“It was so lovely to be welcomed by a similar agency doing such great work.”

”

# Giving back

Unfortunately, we haven't yet managed any volunteering activities as a team. However, we have some exciting new partnerships and are looking forward to doing an upcoming activity with our long-term 1% for the Planet partners, Surfers Against Sewage, soon!



Surfers Against  
Sewage ©



# Looking ahead

We have some ambitious aims for the year ahead.

These objectives will be the framework within which we aim to make progress on our four pillars. Our success will be measured by how much closer we move towards achieving our mission of proving not only that sustainable business is possible but just how profitable it can be both financially and environmentally, benefitting people and planet.

We want to show that we can not only compete head to head with conventional business, but also lead the way towards sustainable business eventually becoming standard practice.

Our goals for the upcoming 2023-2024 financial year:

Pillars 1 and 2

## Operations and clients

We're reviewing our team structure as we head into the new financial year, looking to introduce a new management structure to the business as we head into a new phase in our evolution. This new structure will form Wholegrain Digital's vision for the future, with a senior leadership team ready to support our onward growth and ensure we're always delivering excellent service to our clients, ensuring their success

Having found a more robust methodology for reporting our emissions this year, we're continuing our research to improve our Scope 3 reporting. Our aim by the end of the 2023/24 financial year is to go beyond carbon neutral on all three emissions scopes.

Pillar 3

## Team Culture

We're looking at new ways to support our team members both in their personal and professional lives, working with Octopus Money and Octopus EV to introduce benefits that will offer team members free financial advice and provide support for their sustainable travel plans.

We're also keen to support our team to stand up for what they believe in, and are working on an open source employee activism policy to this end, to offer practical support to team members with their personal activism.

Pillar 4

## Digital Sustainability

We want to build on the success of Website Carbon, with plans to introduce a new rating system that will help to make the idea of website carbon emissions more mainstream by making the results much easier to understand.

We can't wait to get stuck in!

