

MILLS & REEVE

Achieve more. Together.



# 2022 Sustainability Report

Driving best practice at  
Mills & Reeve and beyond

## In this report

- 3 Our commitment to net zero
- 4 Achieving more for the world - Neil Pearson, Head of ESG and Social Value
- 5 Taking vital action - Jessica Wilkes-Ball, Sustainability Manager
- 6 2022 sustainability snapshot
- 8 Action to-date and future plans
  - Cutting carbon emissions at every touchpoint
  - Adopting globally recognised standards
- 11 Scrutiny and engagement
  - Independent evaluation to ensure best practice
  - Communications, champions and carbon literacy
  - Eye on the supply chain
- 12 Real examples
- 16 Ask us questions

I hope you will take the time to read this, our first Sustainability Report. We've set ourselves some ambitious environmental goals and while we have a long way to go, we've taken some huge strides forward in the last 12 months and I'm very proud of what we've achieved.

**Justin Ripman**

Senior Partner and Board Sponsor for ESG  
Mills & Reeve

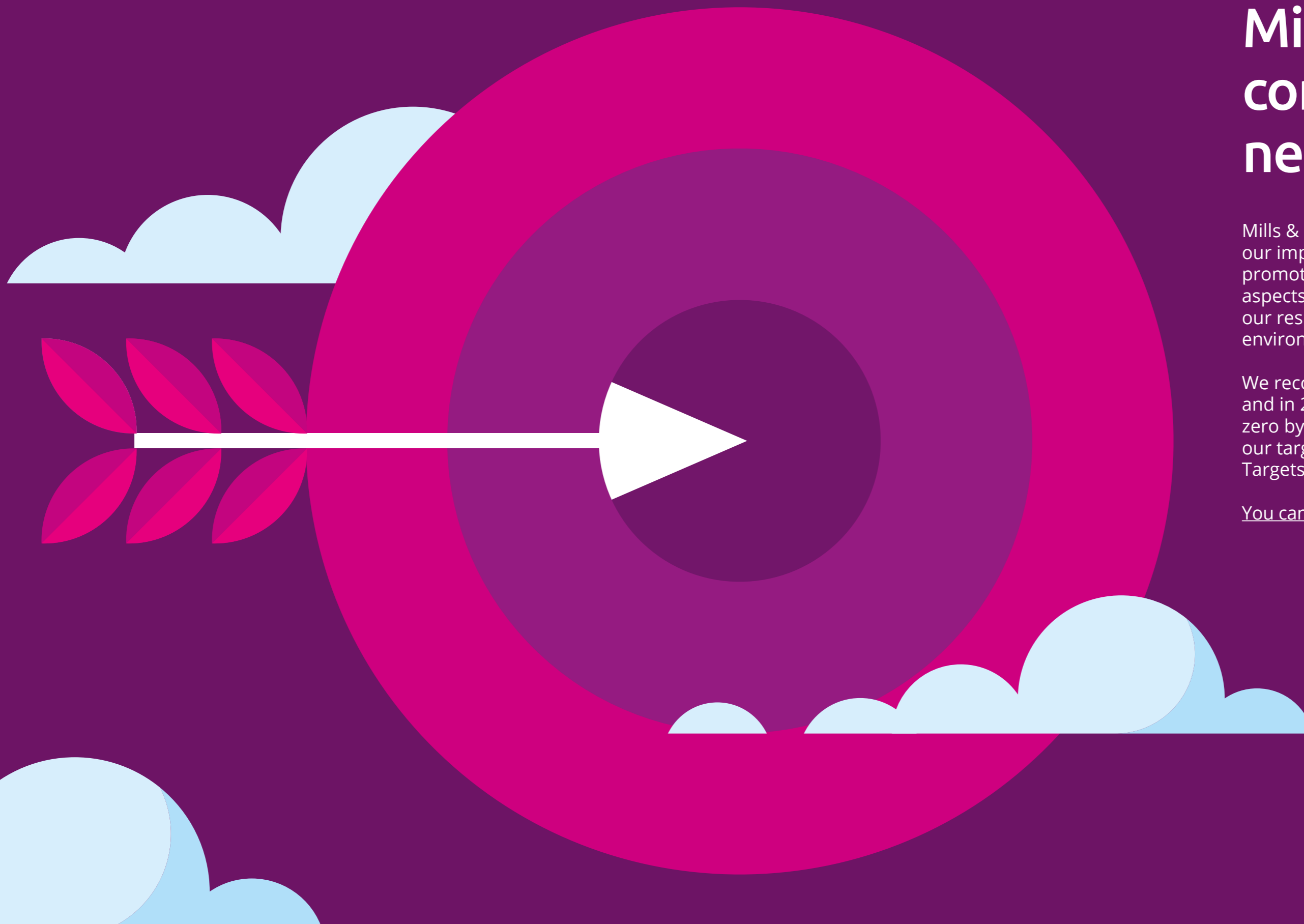


# Mills & Reeve's commitment to net zero

Mills & Reeve is committed to minimising our impact on the environment, ensuring we promote environmental sustainability in all aspects of our operations, and recognising our responsibility for guardianship of the environment.

We recognise the importance of decarbonising and in 2022 we set our goals to achieve net zero by 2050, and have committed to having our targets validated by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi).

[You can read our full net zero statement HERE](#)



# Achieving more for the world

A law firm might not be the type of organisation that springs to mind when you think of environmental sustainability. Compared to many sectors, our footprint is small and straightforward. We don't make physical products, consume large amounts of natural resources, or significantly affect biodiversity. But as well as reducing the impact of our offices, travel and waste, we believe we have a wider role to play. Our work connects us to many people, businesses and organisations. When we make more sustainable choices, it has a ripple effect.

That's why we're reviewing how we work, and the things that we do – large and small – through a green lens. Our team's vision is to reach a point where sustainability is built into every decision at Mills & Reeve.

## Working together

We're already asking more of our suppliers and scrutinising our supply chain to a greater extent. We look at how new technology can power greener work. From office lease decisions, to our travel policies and client events, the list of areas where we're looking to make changes to keep improving is endless. But there's still more to be done.

Being more responsible is the direction of travel for all organisations. For many, including Mills & Reeve, this is a no-brainer - we do it because we should. All of us need to help slow the impact of climate change. Aside from it being the right thing to do, there is also a commercial imperative. There's increasing demand from our people, and from those we want to recruit, and environmental sustainability is never far from our clients' thoughts. Organisations increasingly want to work with advisors whose values chime with their own, who have a net zero carbon strategy and who can help them make greener choices.

Organisations that stick their heads in the sand will jeopardise their own financial sustainability in the longer term. Mills & Reeve has been a thriving, growing organisation since 1880, and we want to be here for many years to come. We know, however, that it will be increasingly difficult to remain financially sustainable unless we become more environmentally sustainable.

## Collective responsibility

This is far from a tick box or commercial exercise for us. Addressing climate change requires a collective effort. We want to be at the forefront within the industry and wider landscape. It's why we're working with the Law Society and Legal Sustainability Alliance on sustainability projects. It's why we commission independent audits by EcoVadis and Carbon Footprint. It's why we run carbon literacy training for employees who want to make greener decisions in their personal lives.

We're not compelled to release this report. We're doing it to magnify the ripple effect we have and to hold ourselves to account, making sure that we continue to push forward. This isn't a question of stealing a competitive edge on another firm down the road. This is us saying, "Our sector needs to be better, so what can we do to drive best practice forwards?" Please ask us questions about our approach, tell us what's worked for you and create conversations. Quite frankly, we'll pick the brains of other firms and organisations as much as they might pick ours. We've all got to aim to achieve more, together.

### Neil Pearson (he/him)

Partner, Head of ESG and Social Value  
Mills & Reeve



# Taking vital action

I've been in my role for under a year and it's incredible to see the progress we've already made to reduce our environmental impact. If we look at the numbers, the biggest change has been switching to renewable energy which has reduced our emissions by 83% – incredible really when you think that the year before we were mid-pandemic and all working from home!

## Environmental commitments

We have pledged to get to net zero by 2050 and have committed to submitting these targets for validation to the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi). This year we've assessed all of our emissions from our operations, waste, water, travel and commuting, and also across our supply chain. Like many professional service firms our purchased goods and services (or scope three emissions as defined in mandatory greenhouse gas reporting in the UK) are the largest portion of our overall emissions.

## Making changes

Maintaining our seven offices produces our greatest environmental impact so we're working with landlords to make other significant changes around issues such as air conditioning, repairs and how we deal with waste.

I've had enough conversations about bins to turn anyone's hair grey. But the reason I place such value on waste is that it's a tangible way to show our commitment to the environment. Visible changes, such as introducing socially conscious and sustainably grown tea and coffee suppliers and banning single-use cups, remind everyone, every day, that we're determined to play our part in creating a greener world. It's about changing perceptions and behaviour.

## Industry challenges

Technology is another key area where law firms can reduce their carbon footprint. In the pandemic, the legal industry adopted systems to scan and upload court documents, with most courts requiring electronic bundles and reviewing of documents online. Some courts have now gone back to paper.

We know that behaviours won't change unless we provide the support, technology, and training to help them change. The change to better technology won't be quick, and we face many challenges around dealing with increased file sizes, associated server storage and ingrained document sharing methods with clients. Everything has a knock-on effect.

That's why we're signing up to collaborative projects and looking at the bigger picture. Technology, insurance, auditing and regulation are essentials for any law firm, but we can make better choices when it comes to who supplies them. We're part of the Legal Sustainability Alliance working group reviewing the legal sector supply chain, so we can collectively procure more ethical options. By helping create the net zero protocol for the Law Society, we're also helping smaller firms with fewer resources activate green initiatives.

Investing in a role focusing solely on sustainability shows that Mills & Reeve is serious about environmental concerns. I have been met with openness at every turn. It's never a "no", even when my suggestions are radical. I look forward to continuing to drive change for our firm and the wider legal industry.

**Jessica Wilkes-Ball (she/her)**  
Sustainability Manager  
Mills & Reeve



# 2022 sustainability snapshot

Trends in our sustainability data and key statistics.

We offer better, easier recycling and food waste bins in every office, providing clearer signage and more information on what happens to the waste when it leaves the office

Paper use down in five years, from 165 to 92 tonnes

40,000+ cups and lids, 120 cardboard boxes and 2,000 plastic sleeves will no longer go to waste each year

2022 was the first year we measured our CO<sub>2</sub> from water usage. 1.49 tCO<sub>2</sub>e is our baseline and we are actively looking at ways to reduce our water use

Green House Gas emissions across scope 1 reduced from 331.63 to 125.88 tCO<sub>2</sub>e since we moved to BioGas in October 2021

Across scope 2 greenhouse gas emissions have reduced to zero as we have switched all of our sites to renewable energy

No waste goes to landfill, with our non-recyclable waste being turned into Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF)

The carbon emission reductions for our market-based scope 1 and 2 schemes equate to a total of 598.75 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, an 82% reduction

Combustion of natural gas down 83% in one year, from 1,803 to 308 MWh and Biogas is now supplied to all sites

2022 was the first year we measured our CO<sub>2</sub> from waste. 3.06 tCO<sub>2</sub>e is our baseline

# Action to-date and future plans

Highlights of our sustainability  
activity and what's coming next.

“We're determined to play our part in creating a greener world. It's about changing perceptions and behaviour.”

**Jessica Wilkes-Ball**  
Sustainability Manager  
Mills & Reeve

# Cutting carbon emissions at every touchpoint

**Our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have fallen consistently since we started monitoring energy usage in 2015. Changes to achieve this include:**

- Using public transport and reducing business travel where possible
- Offering hybrid working and encouraging online meeting platforms
- Purchasing all energy from renewable sources
- Using energy saving sensor operated LED lighting, and turning off heating and non-essential equipment outside office hours
- Digital servicing of clients through online file sharing and promoting use of digital signatures

- Phasing out single-use plastic from our catering outlets and using vegware packaging for take away meals
- Our new tea supplier, Hope & Glory, provides non-individually wrapped bags that are ethically sourced, plastic-free and fully compostable
- Sourcing our 150kg+ annual consumption of coffee from Redemption Roasters
- Switching to chemical and plastic-free cleaning products and providing cleaners with recycled uniforms, gloves, cloths, and hoovers
- Replacing single use plastic bottles with refillable bottles in kitchen and bathroom facilities, and switching to plastic-free dishwasher tablets
- A fully electronic filing system, reducing our paper file storage
- Paper-free events
- Purchasing recycled and recyclable items for promotions
- Using social suppliers and locally sourced food at events
- Donating redundant IT hardware to charities to refurbish and recycle
- Replacing server hardware with more power efficient models, and using power-saver PCs

**To keep our carbon emissions falling, we are:**

- Committed to become net zero for all scopes by 2050, and to having our targets approved by the SBTi
- Publishing a credible carbon reduction plan
- Auditing all offices to review where we can improve energy efficiency
- Scoping out on-site energy generation
- Reviewing travel policies
- Researching virtual hearings
- Introducing more education and awareness about our operations, and how our staff can help
- Launching a pilot scheme in Norwich to investigate alternative ways of commuting





# Adopting globally recognised standards

We're actively involved in well-known initiatives to improve our own operations, and those of others.



## Greener Litigation Pledge

We've signed up to this target-driven initiative to reduce the environmental impact of dispute resolution.

For more see page 12

## Legal Sustainability Alliance

We're a longstanding member, sharing learnings across firms to collectively act on climate change.

## Law Society

Net Zero Now are working with the Law Society of England and Wales to develop a net zero Legal Sector Protocol to define what net zero means for the legal sector and provides tools to calculate, reduce and compensate for greenhouse gas emissions.

We're on the protocol steering committee and have been engaged throughout the development process. We're also taking part in the protocol pilot to make sure it is fit for purpose and reflects the needs of the legal sector.

## Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM)

Our offices in Manchester, London and Cambridge have BREEAM status, showing our dedication to making them as sustainable as possible.

## UK Government's Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS)

We've completed phases one and two, with phase three set to be completed this year.

## ISO 14001 accreditation

We're working towards this environmental management certification.

## Net Positive

Sustainability is important to our higher education clients and each year we review our progress through the Net Positive online assessment tool and share our sustainability action plan.

## Business in the Community

We've joined this responsible business network, which is one of the largest and longest-established in the country.

Its members collaborate to advance the responsible business agenda, including driving continual, responsible improvement, prioritising actions that benefit communities and having a positive environmental impact.

## United Nations Sustainable Global Compact

We're joining the Compact and will align our activity to the Sustainable Development Goals.

# Scrutiny and engagement



## Independent evaluation to ensure best practice

We're verified and monitored by two independent organisations.

To affect change, we must understand our starting point and plot a course to where we want to be. We commission third party expert input to assess our current carbon emissions, spot opportunities for improvement, and set science-based targets, including:

### EcoVadis

Each year, we carry out the in-depth sustainability survey by the leading global ratings agency in the ESG field. Our latest assessment in 2021 placed us well above the average for the legal sector and in the top 25% of companies.



### Carbon Footprint

Provide us with independent and thorough understanding of our emissions and have given us a comprehensive assessment that has helped us to identify current major emission sources and opportunities for savings in the future.



## Communications, champions and carbon literacy

We actively engage every one of our 1,000+ employees to create change.

To help staff understand what we are trying to achieve and how they can help make it happen, we take a holistic approach, including:

### Internal communications

We launched an internal Sustainability Hub, ESG newsletter and podcast series, and run events featuring guest speakers, such as the Net Zero Business Engagement Lead from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. We also conducted a survey of all staff to gather their views on material issues that mattered to them and asked for ideas of initiatives they would like to see us implement.

### Training

We have an internal microsite with online training and resources, and all employees and partners are offered environmental awareness training. In 2023 we are planning to roll out a bespoke carbon literacy training course.

### Community

A network of knowledgeable ambassadors in each office drive progress, raise understanding and share information.

## Eye on the supply chain

We make supplier decisions, especially for our top 30 suppliers, based on alignment to our values.

We have an in-depth ESG questionnaire during onboarding and actively collaborate with our suppliers to understand and monitor their environmental credentials, the impact of their activities and commitment to ESG and net zero.

We now collect more detailed data on the ESG commitments of our suppliers and are working towards a bespoke online portal to provide us with an accurate view of supplier commitments and how they support our own net zero ambitions. We expect suppliers to hold the ISO 14001 standard or be actively working towards achieving it.

### ESG committee

A group of cross functional people from across the firm meet to make sure policies and procedures are working towards our net zero ambitions.

# Real examples

Three ways we're making  
more sustainable decisions.

“Our team’s vision is to reach a point where sustainability is built into every decision at Mills & Reeve.”

**Neil Pearson**  
Partner, Head of ESG and Social Value  
Mills & Reeve

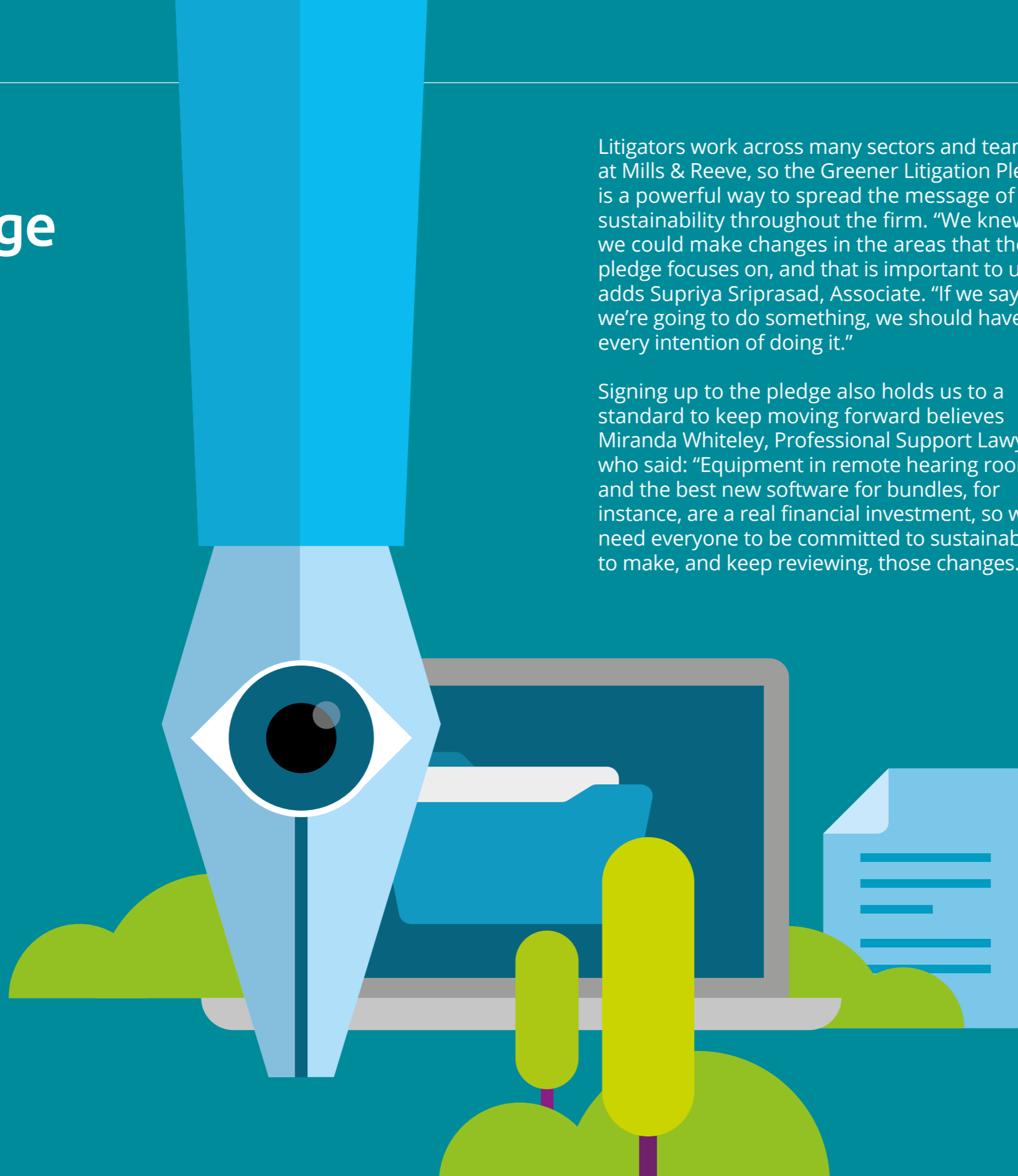
# Greener Litigation Pledge

## Improving the sustainability of our legal processes

Litigators work across many sectors and teams at Mills & Reeve, so the Greener Litigation Pledge is a powerful way to spread the message of sustainability throughout the firm. “We knew we could make changes in the areas that the pledge focuses on, and that is important to us,” adds Supriya Sriprasad, Associate. “If we say we’re going to do something, we should have every intention of doing it.”

Signing up to the pledge also holds us to a standard to keep moving forward believes Miranda Whiteley, Professional Support Lawyer, who said: “Equipment in remote hearing rooms and the best new software for bundles, for instance, are a real financial investment, so we need everyone to be committed to sustainability to make, and keep reviewing, those changes.”

“In the few months since we signed the pledge, we have set up a project group that meets regularly with passionate representatives from across the firm. Everyone has responsibility for their own focus area, such as travel or printing. Systemic changes to the way we work are never straightforward or else they would already have happened. To be successful, everyone from IT and facilities to lawyers in key sectors need to be involved. We’re currently running focus groups to find out everyone’s requirements, so we can ensure our changes meet their needs, as well as those of the courts.”



## Hospitality

# How a cup of tea changes perceptions

When people started adopting hybrid working after the pandemic, it was unclear how busy our sites would be each day. For Rachel Stebbing, Group Lead Chef Manager of our catering and hospitality team from Gather & Gather, her first thought was how to minimise food waste. “We put in place a pre-order service through an app so we weren’t producing food that wasn’t required,” she reveals. “We tracked how many people we were serving and that enabled us to spot trends and go back to cooking to order. That’s the best way to keep everything fresh and manage our food waste.”

The team has come back from the pandemic hungry to be as sustainable as possible. “Everybody is more interested in where food comes from and how it’s produced,” Rachel says. “One of the biggest ways we can support the firm is changing the coffee and tea we serve. We’re now working with Redemption Roasters, a sustainable coffee producer which supports rehabilitation programmes for prison inmates. We also have a new tea supplier – Hope & Glory. They are an amazing tea company who are sustainable, plastic free, organic, and support responsible growers. Displayed in glass jars, the teas look lovely in client areas and offices and that has a knock-on effect.

“We’re no longer using disposable drinks cups either. It’s the smaller details that people pay attention to. It helps change thought processes and gets people looking at their own sites in a different way.”



# Events

## Why events are the perfect place to spread our sustainability message



We meet many people during the hundreds of events we run each year for clients and teams. It's an opportunity for us to showcase our values, which is why the events team is keen to be at the forefront of promoting sustainability in the firm. "The change needs to come from us," believes Kate Emms, Senior Events & Hospitality Executive, "but it's something the lawyers are pushing for too. They are keen to take promotional items to events and provide hospitality in a sustainable way."

The events team have taken steps including reviewing the items we share at conferences and exhibitions, and have started to replace plastic giveaways with items such as sweets in sustainable packaging, branded metal water bottles and recycled notebooks. The team has also been looking at how to reduce its waste and go completely paper free. Key to this is developing an events app in collaboration with the innovation team. It's being tested on internal team away days and we hope to launch it for external events soon. Attendees will use the app

to sign in when they arrive, access content and handouts and fill in online feedback forms.

A new caterer has been appointed at the Manchester office that delivers everything on bicycles in biodegradable compostable boxes. The whole team now has authority to order wine, beer and soft drinks from sustainable companies through Social Supermarket. Jamie Palmer, co-Founder and CEO of Social Supermarket supplies many of the new items and believes Mills & Reeve's focus is spot on. "It's not just important what companies themselves do, but what action they inspire in other organisations," he says. "Items you choose to share at events, what you eat and drink...they are tangible ways of showing what matters to you."

We'd welcome  
any questions,  
feedback  
and ideas.

Please get  
in touch.

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For more on our latest sustainability initiatives,  
visit our [Environmental, Social and Governance  
homepage](#)

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## About Mills & Reeve

Mills & Reeve is a leading UK law firm centred on achieving more for clients, their businesses and the wider communities we serve.

Our clients and their industries benefit from our knowledge and learning – on everything from wellbeing, diversity and inclusion to global trends. The wider community benefits from a focus on sustainability in client and business decisions.

Clients get a consistent experience with no surprises – we tell them what they need to know, when they need to know it. Our sector and market expertise helps us understand clients' issues. And our technology and innovations help them achieve more with less effort.

We build personal relationships, with advice individually tailored to individual need. And if clients need things we don't offer, we draw on our network to give recommendations.

Our 1,100 plus people and over 600 lawyers share one vision – achieving more for clients.

## Data explanation

As a year, 2020/21 was unique, as our operational environmental impact plummeted overnight when we all started working from home. As it is pre-pandemic, 2019/20 is the year most comparable to our recent 2021/22 results. If we compare these two years, we have seen a significant drop

in emissions due to changes in energy, waste and water usage and supply, as outlined on the previous pages. Going forward, we will increase the amount of data we collect to go beyond regulatory requirements and help us move closer to our net zero ambitions.

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