

FORSTER  
COMMUNICATIONS

# IMPACT REPORT

2022-23

Certified



Business  
Declares

RACE TO ZERO



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## WINNING AWARDS FOR OUR WORK



# ACTION DRIVEN BY PURPOSE

FOUNDED IN 1996, FORSTER COMMUNICATIONS EXISTS  
TO MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET.

We believe that communications is critical to change attitudes and deliver the new systems and solutions needed to build a fairer, more sustainable world.


Our desire to deliver progress as quickly as possible is what drives our work with business, charities, foundations and investors.

Every day, we create strategic communications that combine a deep understanding of social and environmental issues, expert stakeholder knowledge and cross-sector connections, helping our clients to:

- Cut through complexity
- Establish a robust case for change
- Speak out on key issues
- Turn stakeholders into activists
- Break barriers and shift societal norms

We also collaborate with a community of partners and suppliers including B Lab UK, Nice and Serious, Green Element and Eshcon, who support us with ideas, inspiration and difficult questions.

Together, we are turning ambitions for change into everyday action.



**Amanda Powell-Smith, CEO,  
Forster Communications**

## OUR PURPOSE

To harness the power  
of communications to  
protect and improve lives.

## OUR VALUES

Curious Minds.  
Collaborative Attitudes.  
Pioneering Actions.

# OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

100%

OF THE SUPPLIERS WE  
WORK WITH HAVE NET  
ZERO TARGETS IN PLACE  
SINCE MARCH 2023

10%

REDUCTION IN SCOPE 2 EMISSIONS,  
INCLUDING OFFICE HEATING AND  
HOME WORKING, DESPITE A 21%  
INCREASE IN TEAM SIZE

82%

OF OUR CLIENTS HAVE  
GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG)  
EMISSION REDUCTION TARGETS,  
UP FROM 58% ON LAST YEAR

10%

INCREASE IN SUPPLIERS WHO  
ARE PART OF THE LIVING WAGE  
CAMPAIGN, REACHING 44% OF  
TOTAL SUPPLIERS

33

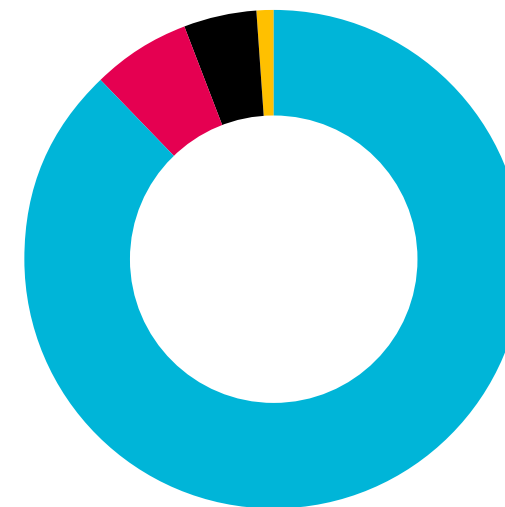
HOURS SPENT ON LEARNING  
AND DEVELOPMENT BY  
EVERYONE IN OUR TEAM

41%

OF THE TEAM CYCLE OR  
WALK TO WORK TO WORK,  
EARNING HOLIDAY REWARDS

## SOURCE OF OUR EMISSIONS

4



- Banking, pensions and insurance (86%)
- IT (6%)
- Business flights (4%)
- Electricity (1%)
- Employee commuting (1%)
- Business rail travel (<1%)
- Gas (<1%)
- Food and dining (<1%)

Banking, pensions and insurance remain our biggest source of emissions. Our emissions from business travel have increased but we saw a drop in emissions from our banking, pensions and insurance having switched provision in 2021-22 and we expect to see further reduction over time.

Data via Green Element

# HIGHLIGHTING OUR IMPACTS

## TURNING SUSTAINABILITY AMBITIONS INTO ACTION

We helped our clients achieve their goals and accelerate action for people and planet, including:

- Working with **Bantam** to celebrate one billion plastic bottles being collected and turned into **Prevented Ocean Plastic** as part of the circular economy.
- Launching **Patagonia's** commitment to make **Earth their only shareholder**.
- Supporting global businesses in the complex transition of established systems to new, decarbonised, resource efficient versions.
- Helping leaders to find their voice and speak out with confidence, often in the face of entrenched opposition.

We work as partners with our clients and suppliers and are proud that over 80% of new business comes from existing clients or word of mouth based on the quality of our previous work.

See the impact of our work [here](#).



## HIGHLIGHTING OUR IMPACTS

### WORKING TO REDUCE EMISSIONS

As our people continued to return to the office post-pandemic, working from home emissions fell by 26% (0.55 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>). This contributed to a 10% reduction in Scope 2 emissions including office and home working. We also saw a 6% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from banking, pensions and insurance, having switched our bank from one that funded fossil fuel projects.

As our client base has grown to include organisations across Europe and in Asia, more travel was necessary. The team used train wherever possible, but some flights were inevitable and business travel emissions rose to 0.78 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>. Despite this and an increase in the size of our team, we managed to reduce total Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions by just under 1 tonne to 242.3 tonnes.

#### THE BIG PLASTIC COUNT

Several Forster team members took part in the Big Plastic Count as part of a Greenpeace and Everyday Plastic campaign to draw attention to the scale of household plastic waste in the UK. One employee noted 63 plastic items in a week, equivalent to 3,276 in a year, contributing to evidence that will help push the Government to take action.

### ADDRESSING THE COST OF LIVING

Throughout the year, we helped our team manage the rising cost of living. As well as pay rises, we offered colleagues access to independent, expert financial planning advice, which was taken up by 76% of the team.

We recognise that access to good quality, genuinely affordable housing is key to helping people who are struggling to make ends meet in the cost of living crisis. We gave 130 hours of pro bono time to the national housing review, building support available by an additional 34%.

#### BETTER SOCIAL HOUSING REVIEW

All social housing should feel like a safe and comfortable home. But for some tenants in England, that isn't the case. We worked with The National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing to create a Better Social Housing Review report that investigates the causes of poor quality housing and recommends actions to put things right. The report has been accepted by the sector and was widely praised as being realistically radical.



## YOUNG LONDON PRINT PRIZE

The Young London Print Prize invites young people from deprived boroughs to express their response to the climate crisis through art. We supported the initiative through team volunteering time and as part of our commitment to building community support for climate action. Through wide ranging PR activities, we helped secure additional support to expand the programme which saw 1,500 young artists take part this year.

## HIGHLIGHTING OUR IMPACTS

### SHARING INSIGHTS AND IDEAS

We continued our work to share knowledge, ideas and best practice on sustainability. During the year, we ran a series of webinars with Business Declares, Institute of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability (ICRS), SME Climate Hub, and UN Global Compact UK, covering our Climate Positive Plan and how to turn net zero ambitions into action.

We also ran workshops in collaboration with our agency partners, Nice and Serious, on how to avoid greenwashing and greenhushing, and with the Charities Aid Foundation on finding radical new ways to collaborate.

And we've shared learnings through networks like the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), during London Climate Action Week and through sustainability media.

### INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN PR

We're working to widen participation and increase diversity in PR. During 2022-23, we took part in a programme initiated by ESG consultants Sancroft at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) to raise awareness of careers in sustainability among students.

Within Forster, we actively encouraged more diverse applicants, for example by advertising roles through new networks like Creative Access, a social enterprise that helps people from under-represented groups get work in the creative industries. We also reintroduced an intern role, working with the Taylor Bennett Foundation to support young black, Asian and minority ethnic people who want to pursue a career in communications.

# UN GLOBAL COMPACT 2023

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### PRINCIPLE 1

Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and

### PRINCIPLE 2

Make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses

### OVERVIEW

As a long term signatory of UNGC we are committed to uphold human rights and only work with suppliers and clients who share our values. We strive to continually improve our working environment for our team, ensuring they have the best tools available to do their job efficiently and effectively, whether working in the office or at home.

### EVIDENCE

In 2021, we set up a taskforce to increase diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) within our business and through our suppliers and client work. This made clear recommendations in 2022 which have been introduced through revised DEI policies and company wide training. A benchmark for our DEI was established through a new annual team survey.

We have a zero tolerance policy on human rights abuse. All of our suppliers are screened to ensure commitment to modern slavery legislation.

All of our team have 24 hour access to an Employee Assistance Programme including access to mental health support. We also trained a senior member of the team as a Mental Health First Aider.

### PRIORITIES FOR ONGOING ACTION

- Measuring progress towards the targets set in our DEI policy through our B Corp assessments.
- Tracking progress against our benchmark towards building DEI within our team.
- Continuing to screen new suppliers and updating our screening form to reflect emerging issues.
- Investing in team wellbeing including additional mental health training for individuals.

LABOUR

PRINCIPLE 3

Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

PRINCIPLE 4

The elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;

PRINCIPLE 5

The effective abolition of child labour; and

PRINCIPLE 6

The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation

OVERVIEW

We are a people-based business and as a founding B Corp in the UK we aspire to the highest standards of care in looking after our colleagues and suppliers. We have been members of the Living Wage campaign since 2014 and encourage suppliers to sign up to the Living Wage certification and pay their staff accordingly.

EVIDENCE

Following a team-led consultation process and presentation to the Board, we changed the way Board meetings are run to ensure greater inclusivity and representation, including two colleague led working groups. This activity was inspired by Boardroom 2030, run by B Lab UK around COP26.

We continued to monitor our suppliers on their commitment to eliminate forced labour.

We achieved a 10% increase in suppliers committing to a Living Wage – 44% are now certified Living Wage employers.

We increased spend on team training by 65% in the year, with a focus on one to one coaching.

All our team are allocated up to 20 paid hours to volunteer for charities each year. During 2022-23, we supported causes including climate change, just transition, homelessness and gender equality.

We updated our team handbook and policies, including our recruitment process to reduce the possibility of discrimination and respond to our desire for greater diversity and inclusion.

Team remuneration and benefits are reviewed using independent external research on an annual basis and we responded directly to inflation with a 5% increase for all, alongside free access to independent financial planning.

PRIORITIES FOR ONGOING ACTION

- Increasing input from working groups and wider team meetings into company strategy, including board meetings.
- Increasing the proportion of suppliers with Living Wage commitments to 50%.
- Continuing to invest in our team with paid for training and time for personal development.
- Increasing team participation in volunteering to 100%.
- Delivering our DEI plan and monitoring improvements to DEI metrics.
- Reviewing remuneration and benefits on an annual basis.

ENVIRONMENT

PRINCIPLE 7

Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;

PRINCIPLE 8

Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

PRINCIPLE 9

Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies

OVERVIEW

We were one of the first media agencies in the UK to declare a climate emergency. In line with the road map laid out in our Climate Positive Plan, we publicly report against our impacts and emissions across GHG Scopes 1, 2 and 3, with targets to reduce our footprint and inspire others to do the same.

EVIDENCE

We tracked our Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions including our banking, insurance and pensions scheme, emissions from home working and commuter travel.

We reduced total Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions by almost 1 tonne, despite an increase in essential travel and a larger team.

We committed to only purchasing plant-based foodstuffs for the office to further reduce our carbon footprint.

We tracked our clients' climate commitments and established that 82% have made emission reduction targets publicly available.

We tracked our suppliers' commitment to climate change and where necessary changed suppliers so that 100% have Net Zero targets by the end of the year.

We encouraged sustainable commuting for the team by issuing 'pedal points' that enable the team to accrue extra holiday by walking or cycling into the office rather than travelling on public transport. None of the team travel to the office by car.

We offer the team, and clients, 50p per mile for walking or cycling to meetings rather than taking public transport or driving.

PRIORITIES FOR ONGOING ACTION

- Continuing to increase the number of clients committed to reducing their emissions.
- Maintaining the proportion of suppliers with Net Zero targets at 100% and rescreen all current suppliers by April 2024 with updated screening form.
- Seeking continual improvements across the board and increasing our B Corp score.
- Continuing to ensure our banking and insurance facilities are aligned to our Climate Positive Plan.

ANTI-CORRUPTION

PRINCIPLE 10

Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery

OVERVIEW

We are committed to the fight against corruption, which is core to building a fair business environment and encouraging access to free markets.

EVIDENCE

Following instruction of our updated whistleblowing policy, we have held cross company training and there have been no reported incidents over the last year. The company has maintained a zero tolerance position on corruption in all its forms.

PRIORITIES FOR ONGOING ACTION

We continue to inform and engage our team in what to look for and how to report it, ensuring we speak out about any corruption identified.

# CLIENT DISCLOSURE REPORT

We worked for a global B Corp in the dairy industry, helping them to push new boundaries on sustainability within and beyond their industry.

We worked for a leading motor car manufacturer on their strategic sustainability communications to support their transition to a circular economy.



## INCOME FROM CARBON CRITICAL SECTORS

12

**11%**

PRIVATE CARS

**2%**

MEAT AND DAIRY

**0%**

AVIATION

**0%**

CONCRETE  
& CEMENT

**0%**

TRUCKING  
& SHIPPING

**0%**

PLASTICS

**0%**

CHEMICALS &  
PETROCHEMICALS

**0%**

IRON, ALUMINIUM &  
STEEL MANUFACTURE

**0%**

COAL, OIL &  
NATURAL GAS

**0%**

TIMBER,  
PULP & PAPER

# OUR IMPACT DATA 2022-23

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## OUR BUSINESS

IMPACT AREA		2021-22	2022-23	% CHANGE	NOTES
GHG EMISSIONS	Office electricity tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> /person	0.13	0.11	-12%	Overall, our total emissions in the office increased as the office was open 220 days compared to 162 days the previous year, a 36% increase. But our employee numbers increased by 21%, so emissions per person decreased.
	Total tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> from office	1.79	1.91	7%	
	Home working gas and electricity tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> /person	0.15	0.09	-40%	With the office open 36% more, and the team attending more frequently, emissions from home working decreased by 26%. We expect this trend to continue. More of the team are also using 100% renewable energy sources at home.
	Total tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> from home working	2.11	1.56	-26%	
	Business travel trains tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> /person	0.02	0.04	101%	Train travel increased as a result of more face to face client meetings, and travel associated with a fixed term contract.
	Business travel short haul tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> /person	–	0.12	–	Essential business travel to service international clients and attend a conference meant that emissions by flight significantly increased over the year.
	Business travel long haul tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> /person	–	0.64	–	
	Commuting travel tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> /person	0.01	0.03	93%	With a 21% increase in the number of people in the team, and 36% increase in office attendance, commuting increased. The number of people cycling or walking to the office remained static.
	Total Scope 2 emissions tonnes CO <sub>2</sub>	3.90	3.50	-10%	Scope 2 emissions include office heating and home working. The reduction in emissions came from increased office attendance and reduced home working.
	Scope 3 emissions from banking, pensions and insurance tonnes CO <sub>2</sub>	229.77	209.50	-9%	We saw a reduction in Scope 3 emissions from banking and pensions having switched our banking provider in 2021-22 and moving pension savings to the most sustainable fund available. This change came into effect over the year and is expected to have a bigger impact on our emissions over time.
	Total Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions tonnes CO <sub>2</sub>	243.254	242.33	0%	This figure reflects our Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions including banking and pensions, business travel, IT provision and suppliers. Total emissions fell by 0.4% compared to last year. While our GHG emissions from business travel increased, our change in banking and pension provision and a fall in working from home emissions meant a reduction overall.

# OUR IMPACT DATA 2022-23

## OUR BUSINESS

IMPACT AREA		2021-22	2022-23	% CHANGE	NOTES
WASTE	Ratio of recycled:non recycled	87:13	89:11	2%	Our rate of recycling improved due to changes in the materials accepted for recycling by the waste provider and with support from our cleaning team who sort waste before weighing and removing from the office.
	Waste to landfill	0	0	–	The landlord policy is to send all non-recyclable waste to incineration, providing energy to the National Grid.
	Total waste tonnes/person	2.68	2.7	1%	Waste volumes increased slightly compared to 2021-22 but this is minimal given the increases in the workforce and office attendance. This good performance reflects increased rates of recycling.
PAPER	tonnes/person	0.69	0.58	-16%	Paper use was down by 16%. This is partly down to using a new purchase invoice system which stores invoices online so they don't need to be printed. We continue to use unbleached printer paper.
SUPPLIERS	% of suppliers who are members of Living Wage Foundation	40%	44%	10%	3 extra suppliers reported they are Living Wage employers on our supplier screening form.
	% of suppliers who have Net Zero targets in place	98%	100%	2%	We changed our final supplier who did not have Net Zero targets in place.
	% total supplier with Net Zero targets in place by value	99%	99%	0%	Our final supplier change was in March 2023. From April 2023, 100% of our spend is with suppliers committed to Net Zero.
	% suppliers who are B Corps	8%	9%	13%	We have one extra B Corp supplier we started using in the year.
NB – This category covers suppliers with whom we have a direct purchasing arrangement					

# OUR IMPACT DATA 2022-23

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## OUR TEAM

IMPACT AREA		2021-22	2022-23	% CHANGE	NOTES
WELLBEING	Sickness days/person	1.65	1.93	17%	Sickness increased slightly from 2021-22, however it was still 61% below the national average and 35% below the industry average.
	Bereavement and carers leave days per person	0.1	0.25	150%	–
	% of journeys taken on bike or on foot against all commuting journeys	45%	41%	-10%	The number of team members commuting by bike or walking remained the same. But the proportion of the total workforce biking or walking decreased as more employees joined us during the year.
	Bike miles/person	32	43.01	34%	Bike miles increased as people came to the office more often and travelled to meetings by bike.
	Active commuter journeys	60%	40%	-34%	Active commuter journeys have decreased as the team expanded but the number of cyclists remained static.
	Active minutes per person	n/a	1739.13	100%	We introduced a new metric to support wellbeing, tracking and rewarding time spent doing out of home/ office activities such as walking, running, gym, yoga, cycling.
DEVELOPMENT	Training hours/person	31	33.37	8%	Spend on training increased by 65% on 2021-22 with much of it supporting our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategy. In addition, one-to-one personal coaching sessions were made available to everyone in the company with an external expert.
	Team members having one-to-one coaching	12	14	17%	
	Access to the profession (work experience/ paid internships)	0	1	100%	An intern joined in September 2022 and is now a permanent part of the team.
FAIR PAY	Member of Living Wage Campaign	Yes	Yes		–
	Highest:lowest salary ratio	3.68	4.02	9%	We reintroduced our internship programme, in line with our Living Wage Campaign commitments.

OUR TEAM

IMPACT AREA		2021-22	2022-23	% CHANGE	NOTES
DIVERSITY & INCLUSION	% of Board who are female	33%	33%	0	–
	% of owners who are female	50%	56%	11%	–
	Gender	Three quarters of the Forster team identify as female, the rest as male.			
	Race	Just over 93% of the team is white compared to the national figure of 81.3%, so we are under-representative in terms of ethnic diversity.			
	Disability	Just under 12% of our team consider themselves to have a disability, mental health or physical health condition, which is below the national figure of 17.7%.			
	Sexual orientation	30% of our team identify as LGBTQ+, which is much higher than the 3.2% who identified with an LGB+ orientation in the 2021 census.			
	Religion	Just over 82% of our team do not have a religious belief compared to 37.2% in the 2021 census.			
	Social mobility	A quarter of our team received or would have qualified for free school meals as a child, which is in line with the latest government figures that show 23.8% of all pupils are eligible for free school meals.			

# OUR IMPACT DATA 2022-23

## OUR CLIENTS

IMPACT AREA		2021-22	2022-23	% CHANGE	NOTES
CLIENTS	Client Disclosure Report published	Yes	Yes		We published our third report as a commitment to transparency.
	Number of new briefs declined because they did not meet our engagement criteria	3	5	67%	We declined 5 briefs in the year from companies who did not pass our client selection criteria as outlined in our engagement policy and as part of our commitment to Clean Creatives.
	% total clients with GHG emission reduction targets	52%	82%	58%	The number of our clients making commitments to reduce emissions showed a significant increase in the year.
	% of income from clients with GHG emission reduction targets	77%	72%	-6%	The overall % has dropped, reflecting an increase in income from clients whose services help others to reduce their emissions but are not major emitters themselves. We are working to encourage them and other civil society organisations to set their own targets.
	% of income from carbon critical industries	16%	13%	-17%	We work with a motor vehicle manufacturer on the transition to decarbonisation and supported a client in the dairy industry with sustainability.

## OUR COMMUNITY

IMPACT AREA		2021-22	2022-23	% CHANGE	NOTES
COMMUNITY	Volunteering/pro bono hours/person	54.25	50.2	-7%	Only 60% of the team took part in volunteering and provision of pro bono service, down on the 100% achieved last year. This was mainly the result of a company volunteering day that had to be cancelled. Our volunteering and pro bono activity included support for Young London Print Prize, National Housing Federation, Earth4All Campaign, Pause, Never More Needed, Business Declares, Green New Deal Rising, The Passage and Bramley Court Care Home.
	Volunteering/pro bono as % of total time	5.4%	4.6%	-15%	

# PARTNERS FOR CHANGE

If you are interested in driving change or would like more information on what we're doing, please get in touch.

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**FORSTER**  
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