



Positive Impact Report 2024

Balancing profit, people, and planet.

Buttress

2023/2024



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“The real interest lies in the ensuing conversation beyond this report.”

Matthew Burl,
Director and B Corp lead

Join us

This document includes everything a responsible business report should: our progress and highlights, as well as our wider goals and ambitions.

As a recently certified B Corp™, Buttress is a company that harnesses the power of business to make positive social and environmental impacts by successfully balancing profit, people, and planet.

Our first impact report contains an overview of our business purpose and culture, our B Corp story so far and some objectives for the year ahead. The document is designed around the B Corp pillars of Governance, People, Community, Customers and Environment. We'll tell you what we've learnt along the way and how this will be carried forward into the future.

So, we'd like to share our journey, and bring you with us. Think of it as part update, part talking point, and part call to action.





“We see this review as a reflective and developing conversation with our colleagues and collaborators over our B Corp lifetime.”

A word from Gavin

“Buttress is a B Corp. We work to be the best we can, to have a long-term positive impact on the places we create and shape, the people who use them, and the wider communities they support. We care about the impact of our business and making our social and environmental performance transparent.

To be at our best, we work on ourselves and our business with the same passion. We are proud of the culture we have and continue to develop it as the practice grows.

We’ve aimed to maximise the usefulness of this report. Alongside detailing our experiences, we’ve included talking points for those considering similar endeavours. We hope it will offer helpful insight that you might be able to adopt in your own journey.

We’re eager to learn about your approach to these matters. We’re in this for the long haul, and by sharing experiences and ideas, we think we can accomplish more together.”

Our year in numbers

It's amazing how fast a year goes by, and equally amazing the amount we pack into the 365 days.


The past year we've worked to articulate our purpose, 'architecture for an equitable tomorrow', and identify and develop the amplification of this as it is embedded into our business. We're looking forward to seeing what the next year will bring, but before we focus on the future, here is our first year as a B Corp in numbers.

365

80 Employees over two offices. 

30%
Carbon reduction per employee

1
Passivhaus consultant qualified

100%
Renewable energy 

£242,220 Total social value

4 PlanBee apprenticeships supported

184 HOURS
dedicated to educational outreach 



Many of our own initiatives were already very well aligned with being a B Corp.

Our B Corp journey

Becoming a B Corp is the start, not the end of our commitment to take ongoing and meaningful steps towards creating a more sustainable future for our practice, our projects, and the communities we serve.

From the outset we recognised that our journey to becoming a B Corp should build on what we were already doing. Buttress has always been a people focused business. We look after our colleagues and treat everyone as stakeholders in our business. Many of our own initiatives were already very well aligned with being a B Corp.

More recently we have been developing our skills and processes to deliver low-carbon design for all of our schemes. We are finding new ways to provide a bigger social impact. For example, we partner with the Mustard Tree and support the PlanBEE apprenticeship

scheme and we enjoy collaborating with local communities in all of our work, finding new ways to engage and inform our clients' projects.

As a practice, we believe in the power of architecture, whether it's building new or conserving our heritage, to change people's lives for the better.

It's the idea of making the best of our culture and human creativity, ensuring that it is available to future generations in a way that is tangible, legible, and can have a positive impact.

B Corp was a way that we could bring all of these activities together. We researched and talked to other like-minded businesses and realised that our clients needed us to clearly demonstrate our Environmental, Social and Governance credentials. We liked that B Corp was a measure of trust and authenticity, holding us to account and helping us continuously improve.

We launched our B Corp journey about a year before certification and harnessed the enthusiasm of our colleagues who provided us with lots of ideas for where we could focus our impact. Our entire practice has helped to make this happen, and every individual will continue to play an important role in our long-term sustainability commitment.

Certification was one of the most rigorous and detailed processes we've ever been involved with and one that has really challenged us to think about the evolution of the practice. It's hard work, deep rooted and hugely valuable in equal measure.

We've been busy...

Supporting PLACED Academy.

Being part of the United Kingdom Green Building Council.

Developing our own Sustainability group.

Speaking out about Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion across the profession.

Engaging meaningfully with communities through our projects.

Our B Impact score

We are really proud of the focus and commitment of the team to move to B Corp. The figure opposite became our immediate starting point. Every year we want to make positive improvements to our business that build on our already strong impact score.



Certified



Corporation

● 81.4

Buttress overall B Impact score

● 50.9

Median score for a typical business



Behind the B

Alongside our B Corp journey we've also been exploring our 'why'. Why we do what we do, our purpose, and our belief system. This dialogue has informed everything we do.



In a nutshell, we believe in the power of people's creativity to help shape a better world and to build places with meaning. Our aim is to create high quality architectural solutions that respond sensitively to their context but remain unquestionably of their time - creating buildings and places that have purpose, sensibility, and appeal.

We recognise the privileged and responsible position we are in as built environment professionals to have a positive impact and to do good through the integrity of our actions: our actions impact the environment, society, communities, and our teams.

We think that a sustainable approach to architecture in its widest sense is fundamental to every project we do. We also think it needs to be part of our every day and not just 'something else' to have the biggest effect. This means we will speak to you about the impacts your project will have simply and as standard.



We have a deep and long-held understanding and respect for the way the past and present inform the future. We are excited by places with inherent meaning and resonance.

This is born from our heritage expertise and is written through our lineage and approach to all that we do. It is evidenced in our values and the way we work.

A community of specialists, people are at the heart of our business. We work with a wide variety of clients from commercial businesses, to cultural organisations, to individuals; and we add value by bringing expertise and understanding. Making seemingly complex issues understandable and enjoyable.

Our why led us to...

We are people designing spaces for people

We deliver timeless buildings

We design with meaning and integrity

We are super collaborators

We are driven by the creative potential of the future

1. Governance

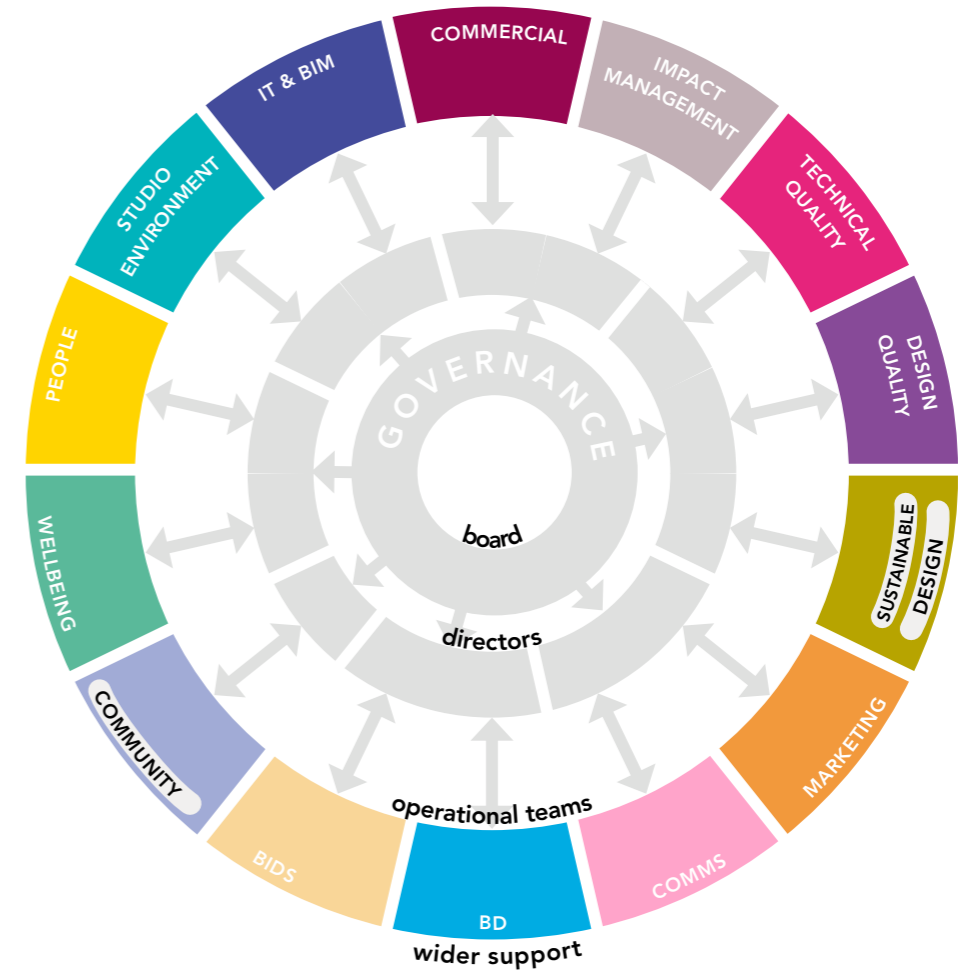
B Corp certification provides us with a framework which we've organised our business around, it's given us a focus for improving our environmental performance, social impact and the way we manage our business.

In the last year we have developed a new business structure to support our growth. We've organised ourselves around the main B Corp pillars to provide a structure for our strategic and operational functions. Our organisational thinking has been consulted on with our colleagues. This exercise uncovered that B Corp was absent in some critical aspects of our business. We needed additional pillars, specifically for marketing, business and financial management.

The pillars needed to be the right ones for our business, allowing for collaboration and a route to and from the board to inform and assimilate our strategy.

Each pillar has a 'B:eacon' comprised of a group of people with the right skills to contribute to the work of the hub. The B:eacon hub members are taken from across the studio to ensure a diversity of opinion and an attitude that the 'best idea wins'.

The hubs are encouraged by board champions to develop strategic thinking, enact operational activities and inform the business plan. Importantly the activities of each hub is visible to everyone in the business through a shared resource.



We want B Corp to be at the heart of how we are organised with the aim to involve more colleagues in the running of the business to a greater extent. We believe this will help protect the triple bottom line that underpins the certification: people, planet, and profit.

This has developed into the organisational wheel you see across combining the five B Corp impact areas into our wider pillars and hubs.

We are aware that as our B Corp journey continues, there are further important strategic elements to integrate into our operations and action. Our wheel structure can be adapted to facilitate these.

B Corp Impact Score

16.9


Mission & Engagement	2.4
Ethics & Transparency	4.5
Mission Locked	10

2. People

We have over 80 members of staff across our Manchester and Leeds studios. We are architects, place makers, historic building advocates, and interior designers. We are cyclists, runners, culture vultures, and coffee connoisseurs.

The most important part of our business is our people! Our Buttress family is open, inclusive and friendly. We celebrate success and work through challenges together. We look out for each other's health and well-being whilst supporting career development through formal and informal learning, including coaching and mentoring by trained colleagues. We are committed to creating a working environment that is open and nurturing.

The all important numbers

52/48 

Percentage male / female split across the studio shows an almost equal gender ratio

344 Hours of external coaching

4 Newly qualified architects supported by our mentoring programme

68  People travelled overland and sea on our study trip to Dublin

5 Qualified Mental Health First-Aiders

15 Percent of staff now have formal flexible working arrangements

Our in-house team have introduced a range of initiatives to help improve our team's well-being and develop an open, secure, equitable studio environment:

- Every member of our team is enrolled onto our employer-paid health scheme, which includes dental, optical, consultations and therapy treatments.
- We have a growing team of qualified mental health first-aiders (MHFA) who all of our staff have access to. MHFAs are there to listen non-judgementally and in complete confidence.
- All of our staff have been provided with regular external coaching through team workshops and one-to-one coaching sessions. As a result, individuals understand their own and others' communication preferences, improving collaboration.
- We offer in-house mentoring that provides a structured resource for those going through further education programmes, whether that be RIBA Part 3, chartership, conservation accreditation or other qualifications.
- Hybrid and flexible working arrangements to improve work-life balance are now the norm. Our IT infrastructure and studio environment have been designed to support this.
- We have implemented a blind recruitment policy to remove unconscious bias from our recruitment processes.
- We have implemented enhanced holiday and leave entitlements linked to length of service.
- We are an accredited Living Wage Employer - all of our team are have salaried contracts being paid above the real living wage. We were accredited by the Living Wage Foundation in 2023.
- Our B:Proud group shares resources and organises events to promote and encourage all employees to bring their authentic selves to the studio.
- We offer all of our team 1:1 independent financial advice.
- Whilst not yet a legal requirement, we have produced a gender pay gap report and shared the results with all of our colleagues.

B Corp Impact Score

29.2

Financial Security	10.8
Health, Wellness, & Safety	6.6
Career Development	4.7
Engagement & Satisfaction	4.6



Strength in numbers

In the busy world of architecture, where creativity intertwines with the demands of clients, deadlines, and budgets, our mental health can be put under strain if it's not cared for.

The greater the challenge, the more there is a need to counterbalance it with support and resources. When the pressure is on, or indeed, whenever someone needs help, we enable our people to prioritise accessing the help they need. One resource is our team of mental health first aiders. Associate David Coulson is one of our trained mental health first aiders. Together they are available to talk to when things start to get too much.

David is the most recent member to join the group, alongside Grace Avery, Edward Kepczyk, Georgia Rose-Garside and Chithra Marsh, having undertaken a course through Manchester First Aid Training. The course covers subjects including how to respond to alcoholism, drugs, anxiety, eating disorders, depression, suicide, personality disorders, schizophrenia and self-harm and looks at recommendations on how to make the workplace compassionate and supportive.

"Societal pressures and personal issues can easily creep into our professional lives, so it is important that we are given the freedom to keep a check on our mental well-being and can reach out to talk to someone who is trained to listen and help – and we offer that at Buttress." David Coulson

The team of mental health first aiders: whether through informal chats, messages or offering a structured pathway of where to seek further help, are there to provide a safe space for colleagues to seek support without judgement.

As our studios continue to grow, the power of shared experiences and a mutual support network strengthens the fabric of the company.



3. Community

We are conscious of the ability we have as architects to create a positive impact and do good through the integrity of our actions: our actions on the environment, community and social issues, through our teams and our customers.

We recognise that delivering effective social value needs to be born out of an internal culture that fosters the same values. Our culture and values run through not only the relationships we have with one another, but also in creating authentic relationships with the people we work with. We work as a team.

We celebrate our differences and respect the unique perspectives of our people. We understand that we are happiest when we are supported and acknowledged, so we have created an environment that encourages learning, skills development and knowledge sharing.

During our first B Corp year we have been building on our active support for numerous community projects and charitable organisations.

The all important numbers

£2,740 

Raised for local charities.

184 Hours of staff time spent supporting local schools and colleges

4  PlanBee Manchester Apprentice positions and counting! | **15** of us helped clear canals and towpaths

64 weeks supporting internships and work experience students

£242,220

Total raised in social value

Some recent highlights include:

- In October a group of colleagues volunteered to support the Canal and River Trust to clear litter and vegetation along a 1km section of the Ashton Canal, local to our office and community.
- In March we worked with LandAid raising money for the charity which strives towards ending youth homelessness.
- We gave a number of presentations at local schools, colleges and universities promoting the role of architects and helping students understand the built environment.
- Last year, members of our Manchester studio joined more than one thousand property professionals across the country for LandAid’s annual SleepOut, raising awareness and money, whilst braving one night outside to understand the realities faced by a growing number of young people, every night.
- We support the PlanBee Manchester apprentice scheme which prepares school leavers for a career in building design and construction.
- We are developing a Buttress Social Value Charter, creating guidelines for our social value policies.

- We continue to support access to the profession by encouraging work experience opportunities for students.

So what’s next?

With the help of our ‘community’ team we will be working on the following:

- Building stronger relationships and working with policy makers.
- Social and environmental advocacy.

B Corp Impact Score

15.0

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion	2.5
Economic Impact	7.6
Civic Engagement & Giving	2.1
Supply Chain Management	1.1



Harry's journey highlights the value practical learning and collaborative approaches can have in shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

Shaping the leaders of tomorrow

Harry Molyneux embarked on his career journey as a PlanBEE apprentice in 2022, diving into a unique higher apprenticeship program designed to nurture talent for roles in the built environment industry.

This innovative initiative offers an alternative route into the industry by giving participants the opportunity to rotate around different industry partners and gain hands on experience in design, construction and management.

During his apprenticeship with us, Harry worked on an array of projects which reflected the diversity of life in an architect's studio. Projects worked on included the Ancoats Mobility Hub

and the Collyhurst Housing project, developing his adaptability and commitment to learning. His experience extended beyond the studio, with valuable on-site work with Eric Wright Construction on our Passivhaus designed scheme, Greenhaus, in Salford.

Reflecting on his decision to choose the apprenticeship route, Harry emphasised its instrumental role in providing a comprehensive understanding of the industry. "The apprenticeship route gave me an insight and overview of what goes into the industry and into the built environment that I don't think I could have achieved anywhere else."

His apprenticeship experience not only broadened his knowledge but also shaped his career aspirations. Looking ahead, he would like to pursue a quantity surveying or project management degree.



Collyhurst Housing Project

We are committed to helping young people to explore alternative routes in the built environment. Harry's journey highlights the value practical learning and collaborative approaches can have in shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

4. Environment

Clear about our impacts. Buttruss aims to continuously reduce the direct impact of our company's operation. We measure and report our environmental impact annually through PlanetMark. Maximising the positive environmental impact of our operations is a process of gradual improvement.

We have now been certified by Planet Mark for three years. This is an internationally recognised sustainability certification that gives us a metric of our current impact. It is also a commitment to continual improvement as we aim to minimise our carbon use. To date, we have reduced our carbon footprint year on year. We continue to make improvements which include:

- We ensure our sub-consultants receive and comply with our environmental policies.
- We have developed an environmentally preferable purchasing policy. When purchasing key items, we seek to give preference, to environmentally superior products, processes or other like-minded companies where quality, function and cost are equal, or superior.
- We have a roadmap for Net Zero Carbon and have begun to measure our Scope 3 emissions to inform the process.
- We have changed our energy supplier to one that provides us 100% renewable energy.
- We carefully monitor our carbon footprint in real time to help us spot any trends and areas for improvement.

Designing for the future

We are in a unique position to advocate for reduced carbon and the circular economy, sustainable sourcing, and improved biodiversity on the projects we design. During the year we have formed and trained a sustainable core team and refreshed our sustainable review process.

We are conscious of the 'otherness' that sustainable design approaches can promote. We think that a sustainable approach to architecture in its widest sense is fundamental to every project we do. We also think it needs to be part of our everyday and not 'something else' to have the biggest effect. This means we will speak to you about the impacts your project will have simply, and as standard. Every small change we make helps create a better bigger picture and improves our shared environment.

To create clarity on the impacts of our design decisions we have introduced a number of specific sustainability services, including an embodied and whole life carbon assessment, Passivhaus designer and post-occupancy evaluations. This helps us to understand and better communicate how each and every design decision can have a cumulative effect on, and help minimise, the carbon footprint of our projects.

Together with you, we will target the most rigorous approaches to minimise the carbon footprints of projects. We are currently designing to the 'gold standard' Passivhaus principals on numerous projects in the studio, and have our first multiple occupancy Passivhaus building on site and due to complete Spring 2024. All the understanding we gain from each project is shared across the studio and with our peers to improve our shared approach to design for the future.

The all important numbers

100 Percent renewable energy supply

30 Percent carbon reduction per employee

17.1 Percent absolute carbon reduction



Planet Mark certification achieved

B Corp Impact Score

16.6

Environmental Management	1.8
Air & Climate	1.5
Water	0.5
Land & Life	2.2
Training & Collaboration	1.7
Community	6.2
Certification	0.0
Materials & Codes	1.9



Our first Passivhaus build

Greenhaus, Salford. Designed for the English Cities Fund. 96 affordable mix of 1 & 2 bed units. One of the largest residential Passivhaus developments in the UK.

Delivered by
English Cities Fund

Location
Salford

Developer
Muse

Greenhaus is a new residential development located in the Salford Central masterplan regeneration area.

When combined with green spaces, cycle storage, and easy access to public transport, these are homes fit for the future. Greenhaus is one of the largest residential Passivhaus certified developments in the UK.

We employ a certified Passivhaus designer and ensure all architectural staff have training in the fundamental principles

To achieve Passivhaus standards within a budget, we needed to create a compact build form and simplify the thermal envelope, reducing the exposed surface area for heat loss. Thermal bridges and fabric penetrations were avoided where possible. For example, air emittance valves were used so that soil and vent pipes vented at the head of the drainage run and rainwater pipes were fully insulated. The simple form meant that it was easier to meet the stringent airtightness requirements and that most of the heat demand is met by

internal heat gains from people and equipment. As a result, the heating plant is far smaller, and the cost savings can be spent on triple glazing, openable windows, and highly efficient ventilation systems.

One of our objectives has been to simplify the architectural detailing to pre-empt potential site interface issues. This required several innovative processes that break ground for residential Passivhaus construction. For example, the scheme utilises SFS (steel framing system) in its structural external envelope. SFS has a far quicker installation programme than the concrete block used on previously certified apartment schemes in the UK. It also imposes less weight on the primary structure.

On site we worked closely with the contractor teams to ensure installation quality and test airtightness using a prototype mock up, highlighting areas that needed addressing.

Our journey does not end here. As the global climate continues to change, Passivhaus design will play a crucial role in designing buildings that will support living sustainably. As a practice, we will continue to trailblaze these principles in our conversations, briefings and designs. We are already working on a second Passivhaus project with the English Cities Fund and Salix Homes. With 100 homes, being 100% affordable, and 100% certified, and we will continue to share the important lessons learned with our industry.



Buttress Associate & Certified Passivhaus Consultant. Alison Haigh.

“Passivhaus is a tried and tested design principle based on sound building physics, its aim is to achieve a healthy, comfortable and stable environment for building occupants. The concept focuses on reducing energy usage, rather than meeting demand by using renewables.

Our Passivhaus planning package is used to assess the energy efficiency of a building through the conventions of the Passivhaus principles. Adopting a whole-building approach with clear, measured targets gives confidence in the building’s performance from an early stage. Passivhaus is focused on high-quality construction. The design and build process is closely monitored, ensuring heat loss through the building fabric is reduced and space heating demand is reduced throughout the year. The quality assurance system is backed by a rigorous certification process that guarantees the building will perform efficiently and as promised at the design stage.”

5. Customers

The all important numbers

Whether working with us as a client, community, team member or peer we believe we are at our best when we approach design as a collective, collaborative process.

Working across the whole of the UK, we know that 58% of our work is with purpose driven clients. They are typically non-profit organisations, charities, government organisations, etc. This means we have a significant responsibility to develop successful outcomes for our customers.

With this in mind, we try to give voice to the people behind the projects and those that use them every day. This is through customer feedback as well as more detailed post occupancy appraisals.

We are aware of and continue to monitor our ongoing project referrals and recommendations. The figure opposite has been consistent for over five years now.



B Corp Impact Score

3.5

Customer Stewardship 3.5



Brunswick

It's been ten years since work started on the transformation of Brunswick in Manchester. This city centre neighbourhood has seen over 500 new homes built and 650 refurbishments completed in and around new public realm and community facilities.

Buttress with S4B started by talking to the community about what they wanted their neighbourhood to be; and now we are back to find out what the experience of living in Brunswick is like for its residents.

Our first story comes from Rob Burgess who lives in the Brunswick Village's extra care housing.



Rob Burgess at Brunswick Village

"My name is Rob, or Robert Rex Burgess is the full one my mother would want me to use. I am now 72 and I currently live here in Brunswick village, where I've been really since it first opened. My life before was horrific. I was ill, ended up in hospital for a month having some major surgery, and when I got released from hospital, it was impossible for me to get around the house. Just by chance, I saw this place, and they offered me a two bedroom flat.

"I feel like I've won the lottery"

I've got the most beautiful view, a lovely balcony, and lovely people around me. I feel like I've won the lottery. When I signed the tenancy the lady said something I'll never forget, "this is your home for life." I thought, that sounds lovely."

The King's Gate at Caernarfon Castle

From the very first conversation we had with Cadw, it was clear that making the King's Gate accessible to all was the key to unlocking the potential of this part of the castle.

The ability to bring people to the upper floor and shape a new place for them to dwell, and discover more about the history of this extraordinary place, has driven every design decision through this complex and challenging project.

Our response isn't a single piece of architectural design; it's a collection of interventions that create experiences and improves the facilities for all visitors.



"This is about 900 years' worth of history and it's that vision that's been delivered today. I'm so proud of the project – it's a joyful thing.

I know that when we started I said that it was all about a creative response and you've delivered that so, thank you"

Chris Wilson
Head of Conservation, Cadw



So what's next?

In 2023 we embraced our first year as a B Corp. On reflection, it revealed the need to balance people, planet, and profit is more important than ever.

This first year has been one of establishing a new way of doing things, on our ever evolving B Corp road map we envisage the coming years to be about strategy and continual improvement.

We're firmly committed to the B Corp framework because we know that it works. We've been able to grow and develop in a very focused and purposeful way, while recognising the bottom line. It gives us a clear framework for driving the business forward positively. Looking ahead, we'll remain focused on getting our B Corp recertification at the end of 2025, and encouraging others to get involved.

Architects have a pivotal role in addressing our planet's pressing issues. The more we work together and share ideas, the bigger the impact we can make. We're making exciting progress all the time, and we invite you to stay connected.

Got questions or thoughts to share?

Contact us bcorp@buttruss.net



Our B Corp focus

We've picked out a few key aims and ambitions as our building blocks for the next stage of our B Corp journey.

We will...

The next chapter.

01	PROVIDE	carbon literacy training on how to communicate environmental goals to all of our management team.
02	EXPLORE	providing each employee with paid annual leave for volunteering to community and environmental causes of their choice.
03	STRIVE	to increase the number of projects where we analyse Life Cycle Carbon in an effort towards Net Zero.
04	INCREASE	the training hours and availability for colleagues through our Pinnacle and Brightsafe training portals.
05	CREATE	a Social Charter that increases the impact of all of our community and environmental initiatives.
06	REVIEW	our Employee Assistance Programme to maximise health and well-being support for all our colleagues.
07	RAISE	the number of projects that carry out Post Occupancy Evaluations as a way of improving the quality of our client feedback.
08	RE-LAUNCH	our in-house Sustainable Design Tool-kit to support our commitment to advancing net zero carbon design across our design work.
09	PUBLISH	our Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, finalise our scope three emission measurements and develop a Carbon Centric Travel Policy to support staff in reducing the impact of their commute.

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