

# AMBITION INTO ACTION

IMPACT AND CLIENT DISCLOSURE  
REPORT 2020-21

Certified



Corporation

# CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE

FORSTER COMMUNICATIONS WAS FOUNDED IN 1996 WITH ONE PURPOSE – TO USE THE POWER OF COMMUNICATIONS TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE LIVES.

25 years later and our purpose is still the same. Everything we do, inside our company as well as with our clients and partners, is designed to add positive value for people and the planet.

We believe that, as specialist sustainability communicators, we can't ask our clients to be brave unless we are doing the same. It means more than walking the talk, it's about living and breathing it every day.

In a year of unprecedented challenges, it's what drove our response to COVID-19, as we helped NHS Charities Together and food businesses reach out to those in need. And it's why we're committed to becoming a climate positive business, and taking our clients on that journey too, through our Climate Positive Plan.

As a founding UK B Corp, we're independently assessed on how we perform as a sustainable business. We measure and report on the difference we make – through our own actions, our work with clients, and supporting and influencing our broader community.

This report details our impact for 2020-21 across three priority areas:

1. Tackling the climate emergency
2. Addressing inequality and building diversity
3. Promoting health and wellbeing



## INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT

We have always been transparent about our performance, using third party accreditation to measure and benchmark progress, including:

- [B Corp](#)
- [B Impact Assessment](#)
- [Green Element](#)
- [Eshcon](#)
- [ISO 14001](#)
- [Living Wage Campaign](#)





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This extraordinary year – full of shock and sadness for so many – reiterated the role of business as a critical, connected part of society. From global policies to individual actions, what we do and how we do it matters. It's been incredible to see colleagues, clients and the wider community pull together, working faster and harder than ever before. We've shown what's possible and are now using these insights, commitment and optimism to maintain the pace of change.

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

# MEETING CHALLENGES HEAD ON

IN A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER, OUR DRIVE TO HELP, AS THE WORLD FACED THE SYSTEM SHOCK OF COVID-19, PUT US AT THE HEART OF THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE.



Our communications helped high-profile fundraising campaigns, including **NHS Charities Together**, reach their targets.



We increased our **pro bono support** for smaller charities, recognising the strain on their funding and resources.



We continued to address the **climate emergency** and received commitments from the majority of our suppliers to cut emissions or achieve net zero.



We produced our second **Client Disclosure Report** and reduced our income from carbon critical industries from 9.5% to 1.5%.



We were **reaccredited by B Corp** and delighted to increase our score by 8 points to 110.2. This is the highest score for PR agencies in the UK.



And we were proud to win the edie Sustainability **Consultancy of the Year** award for the second time.

## THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

**70%** decrease in carbon emissions from our offices

**57%** of our suppliers committed to net zero or setting an emissions reduction target

**714** hours of pro-bono support for smaller charities, up 224% on 2019-20

**6%** increase in our suppliers who are members of the Living Wage Campaign

**400%** increase in investment in employee learning and development including one-to-one coaching

**2,000** miles of exercise by our team as part of Better by Miles, raising money for Whitechapel Mission



# TAKING CLIMATE ACTION

## OURSELVES

OUR CLIMATE POSITIVE PLAN COMMITS US TO REDUCE EMISSIONS, NOT ONLY IN OUR BUSINESS BUT THROUGHOUT OUR VALUE CHAIN.

### **Net zero commitments**

We set a target that by March 2022, all our suppliers would match our commitment to achieving net zero by 2030. Although COVID-19 disruption delayed this work, by the end of the year, 57% had responded positively with 38% already committed to net zero.

### **Reducing emissions**

We achieved a reduction of 5.7 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from in-office energy, waste and travel – a net reduction of almost 2.5 tonnes when emissions from home working are accounted for.

### **Measuring indirect emissions**

We measured our indirect (Scope 3) emissions for the first time, and identified pensions, banking and IT as our major contributors. We will prioritise action to address this in the year ahead, working with B Corp and the Make My Money Matter campaign.

### **Offsetting**

We offset all of our Scope 2 and 3 emissions through our carbon offsetting partner – ClimateCare. This supports renewable energy projects in India and clean cookstoves in Ghana and Bangladesh, reducing the emissions produced from burning fossil fuels.



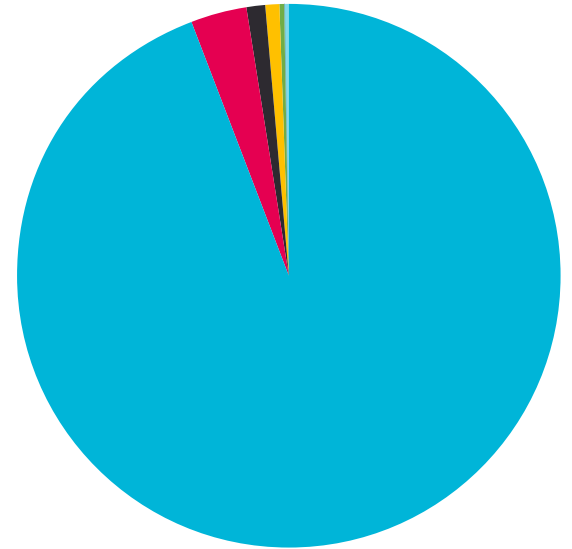
**2.5 TONNES**  
NET REDUCTION IN CO<sub>2</sub>  
EMISSIONS 2020-21



At Forster, initiatives like our Climate Positive Plan are made fun and run through everything that we do, helping us all to live better, healthier and safer lives and protect the planet. We're now happily a vegan office to reduce our carbon impact and our pedal points scheme means that the majority of us cycle. Forster also helped us all switch to renewable energy suppliers at home which has been really important this year.

**Olivia Martin, Senior Consultant, Forster Communications**

## SOURCE OF OUR EMISSIONS\*



- Pensions & Banking (237)
- IT (8.39)
- Gas (2.8)
- Electricity (1.8)
- Flights (1.2)
- Employee commuting (0.029)
- Food & Drink (0.003)

\*Tonnes CO2

Data via Green Element

**On your bike!**

**FORSTER  
COMMUNICATIONS**

# TAKING CLIMATE ACTION

## OUR CLIENTS

OUR TARGET IS THAT BY APRIL 2023, ALL OUR CLIENTS WILL HAVE PUBLICLY COMMITTED TO REDUCE THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINT.

### Reducing emissions

We tracked our clients' commitments to cutting emissions, finding 37% have net zero targets: 71% of our business clients and 15% of our not-for-profit clients. These findings will help us target support for clients who want to deepen their climate commitments in the year ahead.

### Changing attitudes and behaviour

We also helped deliver climate action with our clients through communications programmes, including:

#### Selfridges, Project Earth

Supporting the launch of Selfridge's Project Earth, which is changing the conversation about how people can shop sustainably, stimulating widespread discussion with media reach of 4.2 billion people (to date).

### Energy Saving Trust

Providing specialist communications to position the Energy Saving Trust as a leading voice in the transition to net zero and promoting energy efficiency. This has helped them to reach 1.3 million households with 381,000 taking action as a result.

### ReLondon circular economy

Working with ReLondon to increase understanding of the circular economy among businesses and policymakers, to help reduce waste and increase reuse.



Forster played an important role in helping us to launch our major sustainability initiative, Project Earth, to a global audience. Working in collaboration with the Selfridges team, their knowledge and experience paired with a results-driven approach helped us to deliver a truly impactful campaign that we are extremely proud of.

**Laura Watt, Senior PR & Experience Manager, Selfridges**







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71%

OF OUR BUSINESS  
CLIENTS HAVE  
NET ZERO TARGETS

## OUR COMMUNITY

OUR CLIMATE POSITIVE PLAN TARGET IS TO DRIVE ACTION WITH OUR TEAM, PARTNERS AND THOSE AROUND US.

### **Developing climate advocates**

We provided all our team with tailored training to build their confidence in climate advocacy, helping them to speak up and drive action.

### **Deepening our partnerships**

Over the next year, we will work closely with not-for-profit leaders including ACEVO, CharityComms and Third Sector to drive climate action across the sector.

# ACTION FOR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

## OURSELVES

IN A YEAR WHICH SAW THE UNEQUAL IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON PEOPLE IN THE UK, AND THE GLOBAL BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT, WE RECOGNISED WE NEEDED TO DO MORE.

### **Building diversity and inclusion**

We created a new Diversity and Inclusion Plan which is currently being assessed by industry experts to ensure it reflects best practice. We also changed our recruitment practice, moving from blind CVs to no CVs with three questions for initial selection. We expect these changes to impact the make-up of our team in the coming years.

### **Paying a living wage**

We have been members of the Living Wage Campaign since 2014, paying all interns the London Living Wage. We encourage all our suppliers to join and our latest tracking shows that 33% are now members, a 6% increase from last year.

### **Achieving gender balance**

We are majority owned by women with a female CEO. However the majority of directors are men. This skews average pay and means we have an overall gender pay gap of 34.6%. We are working to achieve a better balance through promotion of talented female staff into senior roles.

### **Providing work experience**

Our work with the Social Mobility Foundation to provide work placements had to be put on hold due to the pandemic. We are looking at the most effective way to increase access into the profession as part of our Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

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**33%**

OF OUR SUPPLIERS  
ARE MEMBERS OF  
THE LIVING WAGE  
CAMPAIGN





“

One of the greatest pleasures of being an employer is being able to reward hard work. We believe that ensuring we pay people well for the work they do is one of the core components of maintaining a healthy team over time. The Living Wage framework helps us ensure we are doing that fairly for people who are most vulnerable to exploitation.

**David Schluter, MD, Fluid IT (a fellow B Corp and Forster supplier)**

THE  
DOM



## ACTION FOR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

### OUR CLIENTS

WE WORKED COLLABORATIVELY WITH OUR CLIENTS TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF INEQUALITY THROUGH THE PANDEMIC AND EXTEND OPPORTUNITY IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES.

#### **Neighbourly pandemic response**

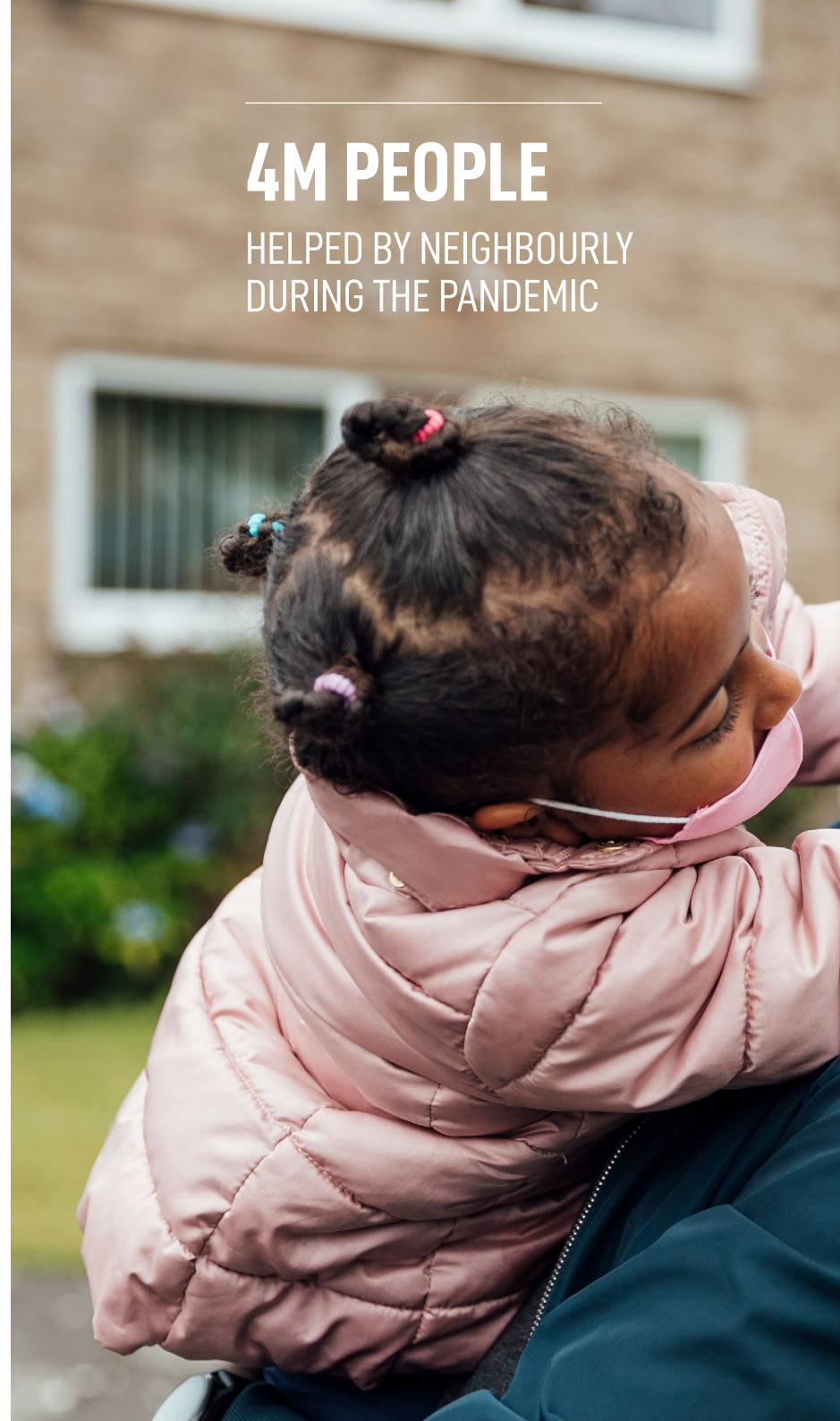
Working with Neighbourly and their national partners including M&S, Aldi, Lidl and Danone, we raised awareness of emergency pandemic support available. We also used our cross-industry networks to increase involvement, helping local causes in the Neighbourly network to support over 4 million vulnerable people in the UK.

#### **Penguin: It starts with a book**

We encouraged Penguin Random House to speak out about the lack of racial diversity in the UK curriculum and helped launch their #ItStartsWithABook campaign to get books into the hands of disadvantaged communities during the pandemic. This work secured over 200 pieces of media coverage and helped to double applications to its WriteNow programme, supporting a wide range of aspiring authors.

4M PEOPLE

HELPED BY NEIGHBOURLY  
DURING THE PANDEMIC







Forster has played a key role amplifying Neighbourly's work during the pandemic, from highlighting the importance of local causes to tackling food waste alongside national retailers. They're genuine partners, quick to spot new opportunities and consistently adding real value to our team.

**Steve Butterworth, CEO, Neighbourly**

## OUR COMMUNITY

### Supporting isolated and vulnerable people

We developed the Community Action Response initiative for Eden Project Communities, helping to generate support for isolated and vulnerable people during the pandemic. This has been taken up across the country and is now a collaboration of 35 community-focused charities.

**COMMUNITY ACTION RESPONSE**

- BE KIND, CONSIDERATE AND THINK OF OTHERS**  
We're all in this together – shop thoughtfully and think of other people when you need to be out and about. Spread a little joy and kindness as you go, even a smile can brighten someone's day.
- CONNECT AND REACH OUT TO YOUR COMMUNITY**  
Feeling connected is vital for our health and wellbeing so join an online group, share phone numbers and stay in touch. Be a positive part of your community conversations.
- SUPPORT EACH OTHER AND BE NEIGHBOURLY**  
Look out for those around you – social isolation and loneliness are key concerns for all ages and anyone can become vulnerable. Sometimes it's the simple things that really make a difference.
- SHARE RESOURCES, ADVICE AND ACCURATE INFORMATION**  
Share what you can – a spare tin of tinned tomatoes, a spare bag of rice, a spare bag of flour – all help! Signpost people to accurate advice and information to help keep your community safe.

Produced in association with Community Action Response partner organisations to encourage and support community action

**edenproject COMMUNITIES** **COMMUNITY FUND**

### Drawing on our networks

In addition to newsletters, blogs and opinion pieces through our channels and sustainability media, we actively promote equality and diversity through our industry memberships and networks, including sitting on the B Corp UK policy group.

# ACTION TO SUPPORT HEALTH AND WELLBEING

## OURSELVES

WITH THE PANDEMIC RIPPING UP THE RULE BOOK ON HOW WE WORK, WE HAD TO CHANGE OUR APPROACH TO PROTECT THE HEALTH AND MENTAL WELLBEING OF OUR PEOPLE.

### Supporting colleagues through lockdown

- We bought and delivered desks, chairs, lamps and big computer screens to ensure our team could work from home comfortably.
- As well as twice-weekly virtual team catch-ups, we did one-to-one check-in calls to make sure people felt supported and part of a team.
- We added access to a personal coach to our Employee Assistance Programme to offer tailored individual support. More than 70 hours of coaching has been delivered so far.

## OUR CLIENTS

OUR CLIENTS WERE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE PANDEMIC RESPONSE. WE HELPED THEM TARGET CAMPAIGNS AND GAIN TRACTION.

### NHS Charities Together appeal

We managed communications for NHS Charities Together's record-breaking appeal, playing a key role in raising over £150 million to support frontline workers, volunteers and patients. We continue to support them, for example raising awareness of the impact of the pandemic on healthcare professionals.

### RVS and NHS Volunteer Responders

We pivoted our planned services to help RVS communicate around the NHS Volunteer Responders programme. They have already completed more than 1.5m tasks in their community.



The world's media knocked on the door when our appeal took off at the start of the pandemic and we were a team of four adjusting to working remotely. Forster came on board at 24 hours' notice and took on all of our communications, which was phenomenal. They were instrumental in helping us raise over £150m, getting our message out to every corner of the UK and beyond and turning NHS Charities Together into a household name.

**Ellie Orton, Chief Executive, NHS Charities Together**





**£150M**

**RAISED BY NHS CHARITIES  
TOGETHER CAMPAIGNS  
DURING THE PANDEMIC**

© NHS CT

## OUR COMMUNITY

### Combining fundraising and wellbeing

Better by Miles combined our goals of colleague wellbeing and community support. Each mile completed by a team member unlocked a donation for the Whitechapel Mission, a charity supporting homeless and marginalised people living near our office. Collectively the team have walked, run or cycled 2000 miles.



# BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL

THE YEAR OF THE PANDEMIC SHOWED HOW CHALLENGING LIFE CAN BE – BUT ALSO WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED IF EVERYONE WORKS TOGETHER. AS WE MOVE INTO A POST-COVID-19 WORLD, WE ARE MORE COMMITTED THAN EVER TO LEAD AND INSPIRE CHANGE.

We will continue to work towards the targets in our [Climate Positive Plan](#) and do more to help reduce inequality and promote diversity and inclusion.

And we'll use the power of communications to achieve a wider influence through our work and our industry networks, collaborating with our clients and communities to make a positive difference at every opportunity.

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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# OUR IMPACTS

THE FOLLOWING PAGES SHOW  
OUR IMPACTS IN MORE DETAIL



## 2020-21 DATA – OUR TEAM

	IMPACT AREA	2019-20	2020-21	% CHANGE	NOTES
WELLBEING	Sickness days / person	1.6	2.97	86%	Includes COVID-19 cases
	% of team who smoke	0%	0%	0%	
	Cycling commuter journeys	37%	60%	62%	Significant increase with employees avoiding public transport
DEVELOPMENT	Training hours / person	26	30	15%	Training spend increased by 400% in 2020-21
	Individuals having one-to-one coaching	12	12	0%	
	Access to the profession (work experience / paid internships)	1 person (38 weeks total)	0	-100%	Work placements paused during COVID-19
FAIR PAY	Member of Living Wage Campaign	Yes	Yes	n/a	Continued membership since 2009
	Highest : lowest salary ratio	3.7	3.3	10%	Increase of our junior employee's salaries
DIVERSITY	% of team who are female	70%	58%	17%	
	% of board who are female	33%	33%	0%	
	% of owners who are female	50%	50%	0%	
TRAVEL	Bike miles / person	26	0	n/a	No face-to-face meetings with clients due to COVID-19 – all conducted virtually
	Train miles / person	294	0	n/a	
	Flight miles / person	668	0	n/a	
	Commuter train miles / person	3,596	25	-99%	

# 2020-21 DATA – OUR COMMUNITY

IMPACT AREA		2019-20	2020-21	% CHANGE	NOTES
CLIENTS	Number of clients	51	46	10%	Reduced client numbers due to COVID-19, and targeting bigger projects
	Client Disclosure Report published	Yes	Yes	n/a	Available on our website
	% income from not-for-profit clients	56%	49%	-7%	Increased income from corporate clients, and impact on charities due to COVID-19
	% total clients with Net Zero target	n/a	37%	n/a	Not measured in 2019-20
	% not for profit clients with Net Zero target	n/a	15%	n/a	
	% corporate clients with Net Zero target	n/a	71%	n/a	
	% clients who are B Corp	6%	11%	83%	Using our network to increase income from progressive businesses
	% of income from carbon critical industries	1.50%	6%	4.50%	6% of income from Dairy in 2021-21 from B Corp client
SUPPLIERS	% of suppliers who committed to Net Zero target	n/a	38%	n/a	Not tracked in 2019-20, updated supplier screening took place in 2020
	% of suppliers comitted to reducing emissions	n/a	19%	n/a	
	% of suppliers unresponsive	n/a	43%	n/a	
	% of suppliers who are members of Living Wage Foundation	31%	33%	6%	Two existing suppliers joined the foundation in the year
	% of suppliers who are B Corp	11%	10%	-10%	Fewer purchases for office, so reduced spend
COMMUNITY	Pro bono hours / person	18.5	60	224%	Pro bono includes NeverMoreNeeded, NHS Charities Together, B-LAB, BBA
	Volunteering hours / person	14.2	10	-30%	
	Knowledge sharing – number of events	9	7	-22%	Reduced due to COVID-19
	Knowledge sharing – number of articles	54	24	-55%	



# 2020-21 DATA – OPERATIONS

IMPACT AREA		2019-20	2020-21	% CHANGE	NOTES
OFFICE	Office electricity KG CO2 / person	279	93.95	-66%	Decreased due to office closures during COVID-19. Emissions include boiler and servers
	Gas KG CO2 / person	0	0	0%	
	Total KG CO2 from office	3,772	1,117	-70%	
HOME WORKING	Home electricity KG CO2 / person	1.39	41.66	2997%	COVID-19 had a huge impact on home working emissions
	Home gas KG CO2 / person	7.64	229.42	3003%	
	Total KG CO2 from home working	108.36	3,253	3002%	
TRAVEL	Business travel KG CO2 / person	254.79	0	-100%	
	Commuting travel KG CO2 / person	136	1.2	99%	
TOTAL EMISSIONS	Total Scope 2 emissions Tonnes CO2	3.5	1.49	-57%	Includes Scope 2 emissions – office heating and electricity, business travel
	Total emissions Tonnes CO2	255.01	247.37	-3%	Includes Scope 3 emissions – pensions, banking, suppliers
WASTE	Recycled : non recycled	66:34	85:15	19%	Reduced office waste with employees working from home
	Waste to landfill	0	0	0%	
	KG / person	35	1.6	-95%	
PAPER	KG / person	6.3	1.0	-84%	Less printing due to office closure

An aerial photograph of a glacier, showing its intricate patterns and textures. A semi-transparent teal overlay covers the right side of the image, creating a modern, professional look. The text is positioned on a white rectangular background within this teal area.

# **OUR CLIENT DISCLOSURE REPORT**



# OUR INCOME BY CLIENT SECTOR

The percentage of our work from the private sector is growing and in 2020-21 it comprised 50%.

Our work for large corporates (for profit businesses) dropped from 41% previously to 40%.

Small corporates made up 10% of our income.

% INCOME BY SECTOR



## KEY

- Civil Society (50%)
- Business – large (40%)
- Business – small (10%)

# OUR INCOME BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

## LARGE CORPORATE CLIENTS

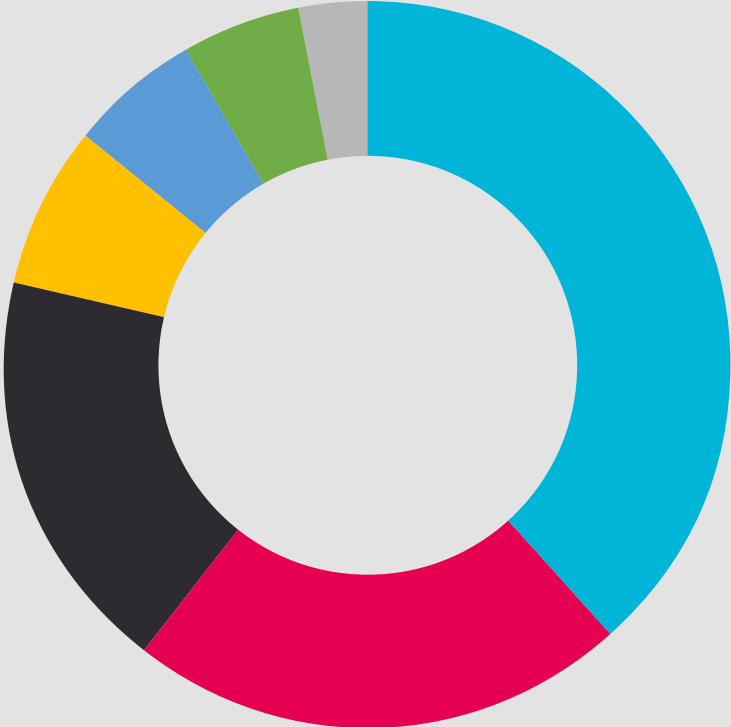
Regardless of sector, all our work is focused on improving social and environmental outcomes for our clients, their stakeholders and society overall.

The pharmaceutical industry accounted for the highest proportion of our income from large corporate clients.

Food was our second largest industry sector growing from 4% in our last report.

Energy was a new industry for us to work with and our fourth biggest source of income from corporate clients.

% INCOME PER SECTOR



KEY

- Pharmaceutical (38%)
- Food (22%)
- Clothing (18%)
- Energy (7%)
- Publishing (6%)
- Property (5%)
- Water (3%)
- N/A:**
- Logistics and transportation (0%)
- Finance (0%)
- Paper (0%)
- Law (0%)



# OUR INCOME FROM CARBON CRITICAL INDUSTRIES

Our income from carbon critical industries grew from 1.5% of our total income in our previous Client Disclosure Report to 5.95% in 2020-21.

We worked for a leading B Corp in the diary industry\*, helping them to push new boundaries on sustainability within and beyond their industry.

5.95%

MEAT & DAIRY\*

0%

COAL, OIL & NATURAL GAS

0%

CONCRETE & CEMENT

0%

AVIATION

0%

TRUCKING & SHIPPING

0%

PLASTICS

0%

PRIVATE CARS

0%

IRON, ALUMINUM &  
STEEL MANUFACTURE

0%

CHEMICALS &  
PETROCHEMICALS

0%

TIMBER, PULP  
& PAPER

PUBLISHING OUR CLIENT DISCLOSURE REPORT IS CORE TO OUR CLIMATE POSITIVE PLAN AND LIVING OUR PURPOSE OF USING COMMUNICATIONS TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE LIVES.

As we work with clients and the wider sustainability and communications communities, it is critical we continue to take pioneering actions – using ourselves as a test bed to see what works and helping others to accelerate change.

We are happy to share and welcome discussion. We urge more communications agencies to quickly commit to climate action and publish client disclosure reports as a sign of genuine intent.

For further information, please contact us on [info@forster.co.uk](mailto:info@forster.co.uk).

Thank you.