Responsible Business at Freeths

2026 Report

Unlocking possibilities
through the power of law
with people at heart







FREETHS

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Accreditations and commitments

Certified B Corporation

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Gold

disability confident EMPLOYER

PlanetMark Certified
Net Zero Committed

CYBER ESSENTIALS
CERTIFIED PLUS

Tommy's Pregnancy and Parenting at Work Champion

LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER

Happy to talk Flexible Working

Stonewall Proud Employer Champion

MB Mindful Business Charter

SCIENCE BASED TARGETS
DRIVING AMBITIOUS CORPORATE CLIMATE ACTION

British Assessment Bureau · UKAS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS 8289
ISO 14001
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

British Assessment Bureau · UKAS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS 8289
ISO 27001
INFORMATION SECURITY MANAGEMENT

British Assessment Bureau · UKAS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS 8289
ISO 27701:2019
PRIVACY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

British Assessment Bureau · UKAS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS 8289
ISO 22301
BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT

British Assessment Bureau · UKAS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS 8289
ISO 9001
QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

New technologies, climate change and shifting social and economic expectations are reshaping the risks and opportunities facing our firm, our clients and society as a whole.

Responsible business cannot sit to one side as a separate programme. It has to shape how we make decisions, manage risk, support our people, serve our clients and plan for the future.

Our 2026 Responsible Business Report explains what that means in practice: the priorities we have set, the progress we have made and the work still ahead.

A major milestone this year was completing our first double materiality assessment. It identified the six issues that matter most to our stakeholders and will shape how we invest our time, resources and attention in the years ahead:

- Equity, diversity and inclusion
- Employee wellbeing
- Climate action
- Ethical client selection
- Responsible use of AI
- Data and cyber security.

Informed by stakeholder views and recognised international frameworks, the assessment gives us an evidence-led basis for setting priorities, measuring progress and focusing our resources where we can make the greatest difference.

Turning priorities into positive action depends on strong governance. Our structure provides senior oversight and clear accountability, and it gives colleagues a real voice in shaping our approach. The Partnership Board, Executive Board and Responsible Business Committee each help to monitor progress, manage risk and ensure we are acting on feedback from our stakeholders.

This year we set a clear direction through our 2030 Diversity Ambitions, Net Zero Transition Plan and new Wellbeing Strategy. We can already see progress: representation is improving across most diversity characteristics, carbon emissions from our offices have reduced and more colleagues than ever are volunteering their time. Behind this progress is the commitment, expertise and energy of colleagues across Freeths, and I'm grateful to everyone who has contributed.

There is always more to do. We will keep listening, learning and holding ourselves to account as we build a firm that is successful, resilient and responsible for the long term.

Philippa Dempster
Senior Partner



Accessibility statement

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Freeths IMPACT

Freeths IMPACT is our responsible business mission to create a net positive impact across colleagues, communities, climate and clients.

It is aligned with our One firm. One future 2030 strategy and our purpose: unlocking possibilities through the power of law, with people at heart.

The framework strengthens our long-term success and resilience by keeping our decisions rooted in our culture, values and wider responsibilities as we grow.



Colleagues

Supporting our people to thrive in an equitable, diverse and inclusive environment



Communities

Sharing our skills and resources to deliver social impact and widen access to law



Climate

Reducing our environmental impact and supporting nature-positive solutions



Clients

Collaborating with values-aligned clients and suppliers to drive positive change

Highlights of the year

- Launched our **2030 Diversity Ambitions,** with representation improving across most diversity characteristics.
- Introduced **a new Wellbeing Strategy,** supported by our Mindapples sustainable performance campaign and the Mindful Business Charter.
- Published our **Net Zero Transition Plan**, with total carbon emissions down by over 5% against our baseline.
- Delivered more than **3,800 hours of responsible business activity**, an annual increase of over 20%.
- Achieved **ISO/IEC 27701 certification**, strengthening our approach to privacy and data protection management.
- Received **national recognition for inclusion and wellbeing,** including:
  - Diversity and Inclusion Initiative of the Year at the Women and Diversity in Law Awards 2026
  - Tommy's Pregnancy and Parenting at Work Champion
  - Stonewall Proud Employer Champion for LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Offered virtual work experience to more than **2,500 young people** and started working with the Sutton Trust's network of students.
- Reached an audience of more than 227 million through coverage and engagement generated by our **Corporate Conscience Index** report.

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Assessing our impact: materiality

In 2026 we completed a double materiality assessment to identify the environmental, social and governance issues most relevant to our business and stakeholders, and where we have the greatest opportunity to make a difference.

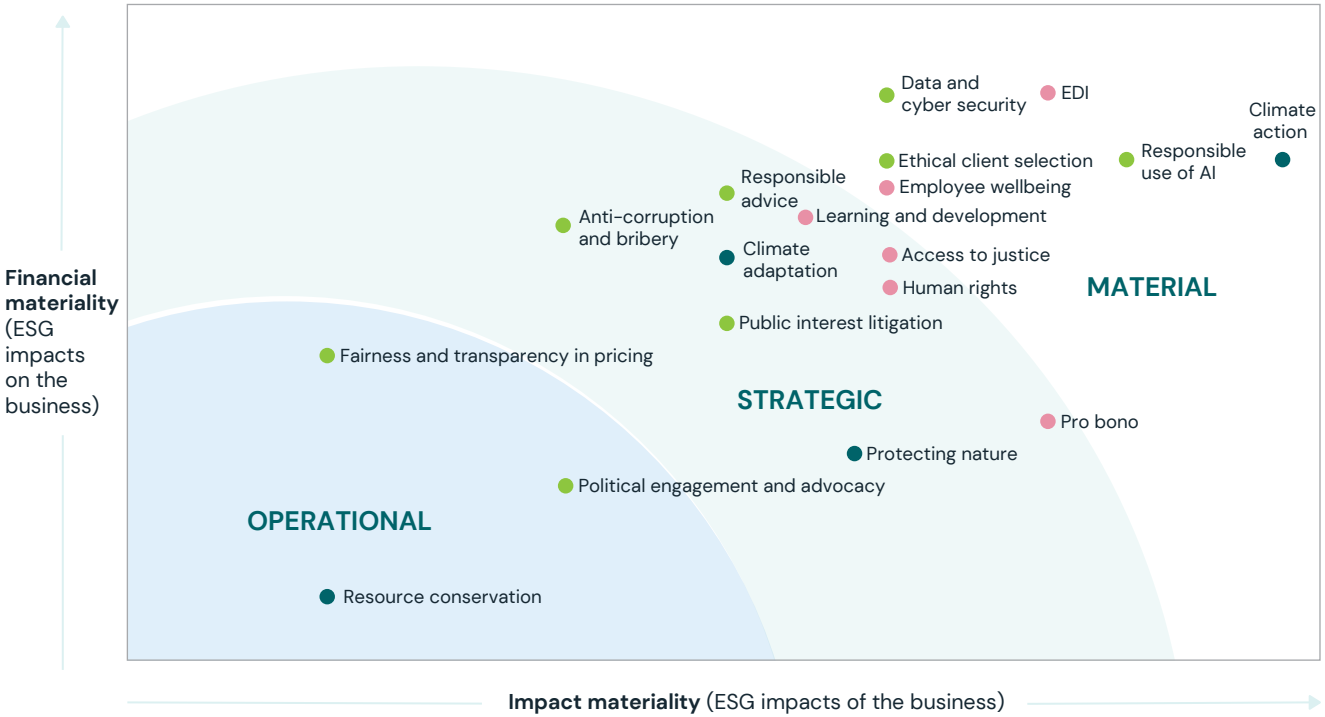
Led independently by B Corp consultancy 11 TwentyTwo, the stakeholder-informed process was aligned to best practice frameworks including B Corp, the Global Reporting Initiative and European Sustainability Reporting Standards.

The findings provide a clearer basis for setting priorities, measuring progress and driving continuous improvement, and were reviewed and approved by both the Responsible Business Committee and the Partnership Board.

Our materiality results

The double materiality assessment identified our six most material issues: equity, diversity and inclusion; employee wellbeing; climate action; ethical client selection; responsible use of AI; and data and cyber security. Throughout this report we have set out our approach, achievements and aims across these areas, and will continue to report annually on our progress.

Materiality matrix



KEY

Environmental:
- Climate action
- Resource conservation
- Protecting nature
- Climate adaptation

Social:
- Employee wellbeing
- EDI
- Human rights
- Learning and development
- Access to justice
- Pro bono

Governance:
- Ethical client selection
- Fairness and transparency in pricing
- Responsible advice
- Anti-corruption and bribery
- Responsible use of AI
- Data and cyber security
- Public interest litigation
- Political engagement and advocacy

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Governance

Our responsible business governance provides accountability, senior oversight and opportunities for colleagues to shape our approach.



Partnership Board: approves strategy, oversees governance and risk, owns purpose and seeks to protect our culture and values in a way that benefits both the firm and wider society. Reviews responsible business performance at least twice a year.



Executive Board: implements strategy and manages the firm day-to-day. Regularly reviews responsible business progress, including monthly EDI and wellbeing metrics, to monitor progress against the firm's One firm. One future 2030 strategy.



Responsible Business Committee: oversees implementation of the Freeths IMPACT framework. Members include Senior Partner, Chair of the Partnership Board, Chief Operating Officer, Chief People Officer and Compliance Officer for Legal Practice.



Steering committees: senior sponsors in place for EDI, wellbeing and sustainability, with steering committees overseeing progress and providing constructive support and challenge.



Responsible Business team: subject matter specialists who develop and guide strategy and engage with internal and external stakeholders to seek continuous improvement across our core areas of focus.



Organisational resilience: our new Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) system includes a defined set of policies and processes to strengthen our resilience, improve how we manage significant risks and crises, and enhance transparency and accountability.



Regulatory Risk and Ethics Committee: provides oversight and decision-making on significant regulatory, ethical and reputational matters. Helps ensure responsible business considerations are embedded into client and matter onboarding and decision-making.



Colleagues: share experiences and feedback with senior leadership through a range of channels including a regular Your Voice survey, Staff Council and employee networks.

Colleagues



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Colleagues

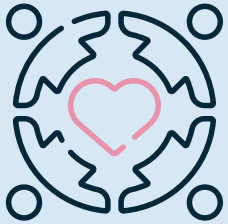
Supporting our people to thrive in an equitable, diverse and inclusive environment

HIGHLIGHTS



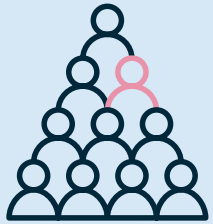
0%

Discretionary bonus gender pay gap



8.4

Your Voice inclusion score*



40%

of colleagues are members of one or more employee networks



2,290+

Hours spent by our lawyers on EDI activities

*This year we set our employee feedback baseline through our Your Voice survey. Deploying Workday's Peakon Employee Voice software to conduct pulse surveys, benchmarking and AI-powered analysis, Your Voice provides real-time insight into engagement and the wider employee experience.

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Equity, diversity and inclusion

Our vision is to be a place of possibilities, opportunities and belonging for all; a place that values 'culture-add' as much as 'culture fit', where curiosity and fresh perspectives can thrive, and diversity is a non-negotiable foundation for innovation and commercial growth.

How are we doing?

Over the past few years we have been pleased to see an upward trend in diversity across most areas. But we still want to do more. That's why we're committed to taking data-led action to make Freeths truly a place of opportunities for all.

In 2026 we launched a new EDI strategy, introducing measurable diversity ambitions for 2030, agreed and championed by our Partnership Board. A firm-wide EDI Ambitions Roadmap is guiding progress, covering:

Promotion and progression: fair and inclusive promotion processes, leadership accountability and career development.

Recruitment: inclusive hiring practices, training and targeted actions to widen access to opportunities.

Retention: using colleague feedback and workforce data to identify and address barriers to progression and retention.

Culture and inclusion: strengthening belonging, allyship, leadership behaviours and routes for raising concerns.

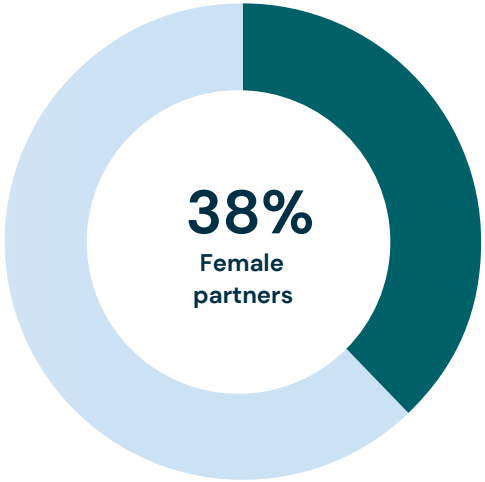
Data and accountability: monitoring representation, pay gaps, hiring, promotion, attrition and engagement to track progress and inform action.

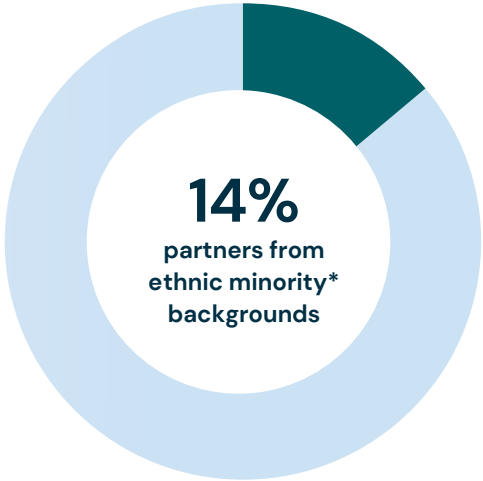


"A lot of firms say they're supportive, but at Freeths the culture is genuinely collaborative; you can be yourself. The team is very open to ideas and suggestions and champions you, encouraging you to grow your own network professionally and giving you opportunities."

Mary-Beth Thornhill, Senior Associate

2030 Diversity Ambitions



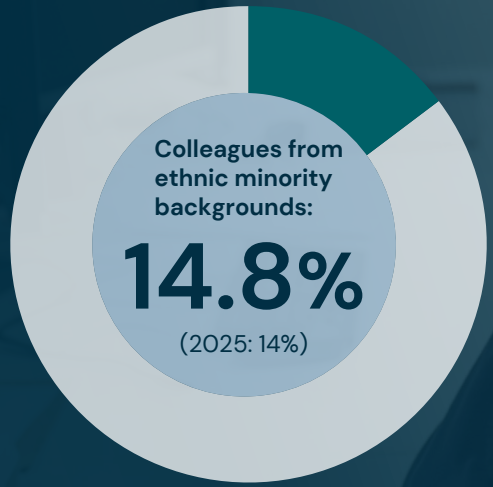


**We recognise that language around race and ethnicity is imperfect and continues to evolve. We consulted the leadership of our REACH (Race, Ethnicity & Cultural Heritage) and Rise (our network for Black colleagues and allies) networks, who were comfortable with us using the government's preferred term 'ethnic minority' for now, pending further consultation.*

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Ethnicity

- Firm-wide representation has been stable over the last three years, but we know we have more to do to welcome and benefit from greater ethnic diversity.
- We're working closely with our REACH (Race, Ethnicity & Cultural Heritage) and Rise (network for Black colleagues and allies) networks to establish strong foundations for a Race Equity Action Plan.
- We've commissioned an expert consultant to support us with robust analysis to help improve ethnic diversity at partner level and across the firm.





"We're making progress in terms of ethnic diversity in senior roles and the ethnicity pay gap, but what excites me is what comes next. We're working on improving our recruitment practices and delivering the Race Equity Action Plan."

Alex Brown, Associate and Rise Network Co-Chair

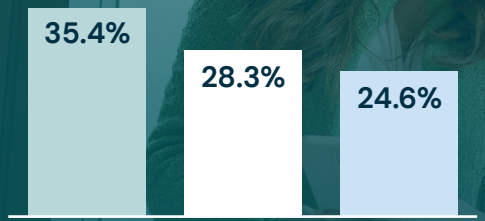
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Nationalities in the Freeths community

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Gender pay gap

Median gender pay gap

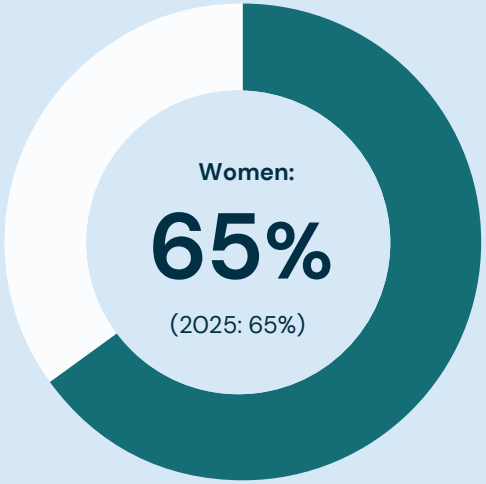


- We've narrowed our median gender pay gap by almost 11 percentage points since 2023.
- The bonus gap for discretionary bonuses is 0% for both gender and ethnicity.

Had all employees on parental leave been included, our median pay gap would be 18.4%. This is the equivalent of almost halving the gap since 2023.

We focus on median as it's considered more reliable than mean for pay gap analysis. Mean averages are viewable on the government Gender Pay Gap website, and our full pay gap report is available on our website.

Gender



- Our overall gender balance broadly reflects that of the legal sector[1].
- We are seeing a gradual increase of women in senior roles.
- In 2025 we undertook a Leading without Limits consultation, helping us understand and address barriers to progression.
- While non-binary colleague numbers are too low to meaningfully include in reporting, we recognise that gender identity extends beyond binary categories and ensure this is reflected in our policies and practices.



> "I'm incredibly proud to share that the median gender pay gap has narrowed again, which is testament to a lot of hard work and how we are embracing change."

Philippa Dempster, Senior Partner

[1] SRA | Law firm diversity data tool | Solicitors Regulation Authority

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Woman of the Year

Freeths' Real Estate Director Coralie McKeivor won Woman of the Year: Gamechanger at the Bristol Women in Business Awards 2026. Judges highlighted Coralie's courage and persistence in driving disability awareness across the sector.



Coralie McKeivor, left, receiving her award.

> I'm passionate about driving meaningful change, whether that's challenging perceptions at a senior level or supporting colleagues through mentoring and everyday visibility.
>
> ***Coralie McKeivor, Director***



Equal representation pledge

In 2026 we signed the Equal Representation in Arbitration Pledge and the Equal Representation for Expert Witnesses Pledge, reaffirming our commitment to gender diversity and inclusion, including in our disputes practice.

Disability

- Disability representation appears to be down on last year. However, given the number of colleagues we support with adjustments, we don't feel this is an accurate representation of colleagues with access needs.
- Our aim is to raise colleagues' confidence to complete their disability data fully, so that we have a more accurate picture in future.
- Our in-house Disability Officer is now trained as a Neurodiversity Workplace Needs Assessor.
- We continue to offer Tailored Adjustment Plans to all who need them, including those with disabling symptoms associated with menopause and menstrual health conditions.

Colleagues with a disability:

8.1%

(2025: 12%)

disability confident EMPLOYER



Disability Officer Sharon Extance, Finalist at the Disability Smart Impact Awards 2026.

LGBTQ+

- LGBQ+* representation in the firm has continued to increase gradually.
- Our Shine Network focuses on building community and connection through sharing experiences and company. It has also supported our policy reviews to make sure our family-friendly provisions are LGBTQ+ inclusive.
- In 2026 we achieved Champion status in the Stonewall Proud Employers accreditation.

LGBQ+ colleagues:

4.6%

(2025: 4%)

*The 'T' is not included as this data measures sexual orientation, not gender identity



Members of our Shine Network and allies take part in the 2026 Pride march in Nottingham.



First generation university:

37%

(2025: 36%)

Socioeconomic status

- A large proportion of our colleagues – including 49% of partners – are the first generation in their family to go to university.
- Just 11% of colleagues report going to a fee-paying school, with 57% saying they attended state school. Seventeen percent grew up in families with working-class occupations.
- As with our disability disclosure, we would like to see higher completion rates and will work towards this in the coming year.



Several offices held Iftars and shared the meaning of Ramadan with colleagues.

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Religious inclusion

Almost half our colleagues (46%) observe a religion. We're proud of the work we've done this year to shine a light on diverse faiths, not only celebrating important festivals, but also learning from an expert speaker about the practical application of religious inclusion in the workplace.

Part-Time Full Power

We know that great work doesn't come automatically from long hours; it comes from focus, impact and creating the space for people to thrive. That's why we support colleagues and managers through Part-Time Full Power, a celebration of flexible working and progression at Freeths. The initiative includes practical tools to help managers create the conditions for colleagues working flexibly to thrive.

> "Part-time isn't a step back. It's a step into something better."

Toni Hudson, Managing Associate, who transitioned to a four-day week to spend more time with her children.

Award-winning employee networks

Our vibrant employee networks are now host to a remarkable 650 members. We were delighted when our REACH and Rise networks won Diversity and Inclusion Initiative of the Year at the Women and Diversity in Law Awards 2026, in recognition of their work creating safe listening spaces following a period of widespread, racialised societal unrest.

> "Excellent innovative initiative which addresses many of the topical concerns currently impacting those from minority ethnic backgrounds."

Diversity and Inclusion Initiative of the Year judge

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> Colleagues tell us they generally feel well supported. We've made good progress, but we know that there is still more to do, reflecting the wider wellbeing challenges facing the legal sector.

Bethan Davies, Risk & Compliance Director and Wellbeing Sponsor



Wellbeing

In 2026 we launched a new Wellbeing Strategy, taking a data-led approach to help colleagues thrive and perform at their best for the long term.

What are we measuring?

Detailed analysis of colleague feedback, sickness data, health assessment insights, counselling usage and external benchmarks has helped us identify priorities, establish clearer measures of progress and shape our strategy, overseen by a dedicated steering group.

The strategy draws our support, resources and initiatives together around three interconnected priorities:

Mind
Strengthening mental health support, building resilience and ensuring help is available when colleagues need it

Body
Encouraging healthy habits through practical support for nutrition, movement, rest and physical wellbeing

Connection
Fostering an inclusive culture where colleagues feel they belong and wellbeing is part of everyday conversations

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How are we doing?

Your Voice scores (see page 8) provide a clear starting point for measuring wellbeing progress:

7.9 Social wellbeing

Speaking up **7.8**

7.3 Physical wellbeing

Workload management **7.1**

The results show some positive cultural foundations, while workload management and physical wellbeing remain important areas for continued focus in line with sectoral trends.



> The Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) training is brilliant. It really changes mindsets and equips people with the knowledge to support others. I really believe we get better results as people, as a team and as a firm when people are happy and supported.

Ellie Dixon, Associate, Co-Chair of the Mental Health First Aiders Network

Mental health support

Through our Total Mental Health package, colleagues can access confidential counselling and coaching. We have also grown our Mental Health First Aider Network to over 100 colleagues, with over 300 hours of training and support recorded.

By 2029, we aim to increase the amount of trained Mental Health First Aiders from 8% to 10% of our workforce, while maintaining a diverse and representative network that provides accessible and pro-active support across the organisation.



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Mindful Business Charter

In 2026 we joined the Mindful Business Charter, a practical framework for reducing workplace stress and embedding healthy, sustainable high performance. Principles focus on open dialogue, mindful collaboration and healthy boundaries, encouraging more thoughtful approaches to workload, communication, meetings, delegation and recovery time.

Mindful Business Charter



> The Mindful Business Charter is about looking honestly at how we work, and challenging the habits that may create avoidable stress. It supports our ambition to build healthy teams and to strengthen our consistency and collaboration through improved day-to-day working practices.

Chris Oglethorpe, Chief People Officer



Mindapples: bite-sized wellbeing

To support our new wellbeing strategy, we partnered with Mindapples to introduce bite-sized e-learning modules focused on understanding and strengthening mental health. Mindapples 'trees' were installed across our offices, inviting colleagues to share their personal 'five-a-day' activities, habits and practices that support their wellbeing.

A Mindapples installation in Freeths' London office.

International Men's Day

International Men's Day prompted a firm-wide conversation about making wellbeing support relevant and accessible to everyone, with a particular focus on the barriers that prevent men from seeking help. Sessions combined neuroscience-based insights with facilitated discussions, while senior male colleagues led informal office conversations, helping to create safe spaces for openness and support.

> I found so much value in bringing together colleagues of all seniorities to talk openly about men's mental health. The session reinforced the importance of encouraging people to seek support before challenges become overwhelming.

Liam Brudenell, IT Field Support Engineer



Our Networking Events for Women (NEW) Network invited Amy Huskisson of AV Wellbeing to share her expertise on nutrition in menopause.



Menopause support

We strengthened our menopause support through awareness-raising led by the Freeths Menopause Network and personalised Tailored Adjustment Plans. A webinar delivered by Emma Neville from This is Me provided practical guidance on symptoms, support and trusted resources, helping colleagues feel better informed and equipped to support themselves and others.

> Menopause led to me feeling like a shell of myself. But I feel fortunate that my managers at Freeths led with 'how are you?' conversations and gave me flexibility when I needed it.

Sally Lambert, HR Manager

Wellbeing and performance

Our wellbeing and performance programme helps junior lawyers develop sustainable working practices. Participants explore practical approaches to managing stress, communicating effectively, prioritising workloads, setting boundaries and supporting personal growth. Delivered over the course of a year by coach and mindfulness trainer Paolo Karat, the programme also includes immersive days at Roseland Farm in Oxfordshire, creating space for reflection and connection away from the usual working environment.



Freeths trainees at Roseland Farm.

Learning and development

In 2026 we focused our learning and development programme on three key areas: bolstering on-demand learning; developing leadership; and building future-ready talent.

On-demand learning
To make learning more accessible, easier to navigate and available to all, we are creating a more connected and scalable system of on-demand modules through Workday Learning. Our online catalogue is growing, with newly released compliance and Freethinking Academy modules. Over 570 modules have been completed since launch at the end of June 2026.



Developing leadership

A new partner development programme, launched in 2026, supports newly promoted partners to build leadership skills and strong client relationships. Eleven new partners are currently completing the programme, which aims to support career progression and create strong and rounded future leaders.





> What stood out was that the training wasn't solely focused on commercial objectives or leadership theory. By exploring topics such as sleep, nutrition and personal wellbeing, and dispelling some long-held misconceptions, this felt like an investment in us as people, not just as partners.

Rahul Kotecha, Partner

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Future-ready talent

We're creating role-based development pathways with structured learning opportunities for colleagues across the firm, focused on capabilities aligned to the five elements of the firm's strategy: People, Growth, Clients, Brand and Innovation. Colleagues will have access to a suite of learning resources designed to build the skills and capabilities needed to drive the firm's future success.

> The role-based development pathways put you in control, providing a personalised learning journey that helps you build the skills, experiences and capabilities needed to succeed today and grow for the future.

Jade Brooks-Read, Senior Capability Architecture Lead

Responsible AI

We are committed to using AI ethically and transparently, in line with our values, legal and regulatory obligations and B Corp commitments. Our approach draws on international frameworks, including ISO/IEC 42001 and the EU AI Act, while recognising the need for continual review as technology and regulation evolve.

Our AI Use Policy requires colleagues to use authorised systems, assess outputs critically and apply professional judgement. The policy requires consideration of risks including inaccuracies and bias, as well as client confidentiality and data protection. Our AI Governance Committee provides oversight, supported by a working group and a tiering framework for evaluating new platforms and use cases.

Neurodiversity and AI

Our Disability Network's Neurodiversity sub-group helped develop a practical resource to help colleagues with ADHD use Copilot more effectively, providing prompts and guidance to reduce cognitive overload, improve focus and break tasks into manageable steps.

By end-FY27, we aim for every colleague to have completed our core Foundations of AI training. By end-FY28, we aim for every colleague to have undertaken further role-relevant AI education, establishing a consistent baseline of understanding across the firm of AI's opportunities and risks, and the principles of responsible use.

Building confidence and capability

Our Foundations of AI training gives colleagues a practical understanding of generative AI. It helps them use authorised tools safely, question outputs and recognise when further scrutiny or human expertise is required, embedding responsible decision-making into everyday practice.

Managing environmental impact

We help colleagues use AI efficiently and carefully consider the resources it requires. Rather than automatically selecting the most powerful model, we aim to use tools that provide the right performance for the task. Through our LegalAI Lab, we test emerging approaches that can improve quality and consistency while reducing unnecessary computing power, cost and environmental impact.



> "AI is increasingly central to every operational process of a modern and progressive business. We've built a governance framework that empowers our people to use AI safely and efficiently, aligning with global best practices. Our new LegalAI Lab works as a critical 'applied research' space. This is crucial infrastructure to ensure we stay at the leading edge of AI, delivering tools that are not only powerful, but principled and efficient."

Nick Pryor, Chief Knowledge and Innovation Officer



Data and cyber security

Protecting the personal and confidential information entrusted to us is central to how we look after our people and clients. Strong data protection and cyber security help safeguard privacy, maintain trust and ensure Freeths can continue to operate and serve clients effectively.

Governance

Freeths has a clear framework for managing data protection and cyber security. This includes oversight from the Data Protection Officer and specialist privacy and information security teams, mandatory colleague training, data protection impact assessments for new projects and technology, controls over third-party processors, and processes for reporting and responding to data breaches and security incidents.

Protection

Technical protections include multi-factor authentication, access controls, secure email filtering, endpoint protection and vulnerability monitoring. The firm also has 24/7 security monitoring, documented incident response and disaster recovery plans, and secure, regularly verified backups. Independent penetration testing and cyber maturity assessments help identify areas for further improvement.

Assurance

Our approach is supported by recognised standards including ISO/IEC 27001 for information security management, ISO/IEC 27701 for privacy information management, ISO 22301 for business continuity management systems and Cyber Essentials Plus.

Cyber threats and privacy risks continue to change, so our approach must keep developing too. We regularly review our policies, training, systems and controls, using audits, testing and external assessments to strengthen our protection of information and support the firm's long-term resilience.

We aim to maintain certification to ISO/IEC 27001 and ISO/IEC 27701 through successful recertification audits by 2029, ensuring our information security and privacy management systems remain aligned with internationally recognised best practice.

Communities



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Communities

Sharing our skills and resources to deliver social impact and widen access to law

HIGHLIGHTS



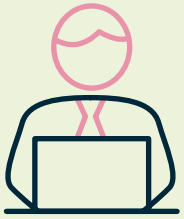
1,130+

Hours of community activity recorded by 188 colleagues (+26% vs FY25)



9

Local office charity partnerships



2,500+

Virtual work experience registrations



100+

Hours of pro bono advice to climate projects

Supporting communities and widening access to law

We are active in our local communities, engaging with charitable projects as well as seeking to widen access to Freeths and the legal profession through our work with schools and colleges.

How are we doing?

Community engagement continued to grow this year. Colleague participation increased by more than 26% and over 1,130 hours of support were delivered, with tens of thousands of pounds donated to charitable organisations and community initiatives.

While pro bono hours increased during the year, participation rates remain below the sector average. Our new Community Engagement Strategy will help address this by creating a stronger pipeline of meaningful opportunities, supported by the governance, coordination and infrastructure needed to increase participation and maximise our impact.

We are committed to widening access to law through initiatives such as our Direct Entry Insight Programme and other targeted pathways into the profession.



Engagement in community activities

+26%

Our Nottingham office ran a series of events to raise money for the Children's Bereavement Centre. L-R: Tim Harding (Williams Lea), Hugh Tweddle (Freeths), Tiana Chan (Freeths).

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Power Hours

Power Hours encourages colleagues to support climate-focused charities, start-ups and community energy projects. Since launch in March 2026, Power Hours has delivered more than 100 hours of free legal advice, including a customer service agreement for a community energy project installing rooftop solar panels and batteries on homes in Buckinghamshire.

> "We now have a customer service agreement that I can trust is fit for purpose and checked by absolute experts. It took a weight off my mind and a load of work and cost off us. Just what a little community energy group needs to grow those acorns into oaks."

Kirsty Shanahan, Founder, Buckinghamshire Community Energy

In memory of Elsie

Vortex Cheer, a cheerleading and dance school based in Southport, officially opened new premises thanks to the support of Elsie's Story and Freeths.

Elsie's Story is a charity set up in memory of Elsie, one of the youngest victims of the 2024 Southport attacks. The charity funded essential equipment and mats for the school, while Freeths Real Estate Director Mark Alexander provided pro bono advice to secure a lease on new, larger premises. Elsie was a member of Vortex Cheer, making the project especially meaningful.

> It has given the girls a safe, happy place where they can grow in confidence, make memories and feel part of something special. We're proud to be honouring Elsie's legacy, which means so much to everyone at Vortex.
>
> ***Aime Cruickshank, Owner of Vortex Cheer***



Social Mobility Network

As Co-Chair of our Social Mobility Network, Freeths Associate Mollie White (pictured) is passionate about widening access to law and ensuring equal access to opportunities for all within the legal field. Events run by the network over the past year include: a celebration of Social Mobility Day with Toni Kent, corporate comedian and passionate advocate for social mobility; hosting a group of young people for a skills development and careers awareness day in collaboration with the Social Mobility Business Partnership; and setting up the Social Mobility Spotlight for colleagues to share their personal experiences or act as allies.

Mollie's advice to young people thinking of entering the profession: "Don't be afraid to be yourself. Let your personality shine through and you will stand out, no matter what."

FREETHS

Emmanuel House

Nottingham colleagues have been supporting local homelessness charity Emmanuel House for several years. Last Christmas, members of the Housebuilding and Strategic Land team cooked a full meal for all residents. The team has since run two breakfast services at Emmanuel House, collecting and dropping off breakfast items when supplies ran low. In September, colleagues went the extra mile by running the Robin Hood half-marathon to raise funds for the charity.





Members of Freeths' Housebuilding and Strategic Land team supporting breakfast services at Emmanuel House.

Lawyers4Learners



Lawyers4Learners

Our London office began a partnership with Lawyers4Learners in 2026, helping the charity run volunteer-led mock trials in primary schools to make sure that children from all backgrounds have the chance to develop public speaking skills and the confidence to speak up.

FREETHS



Business Hero Awards 2026

Trainee Legal Executive Maxwell McCartney (pictured) was named Yorkshire Emerging Male Leader at the Business Hero Awards 2026 - a celebration of individuals making a positive impact through leadership, community contribution and social responsibility. Maxwell was recognised for his enthusiastic contribution to Freeths' culture, including his involvement in charity events, learning initiatives and activities that bring colleagues together, such as fundraising for Martin House Children's Hospice.

Girls Out Loud

Two Manchester office colleagues, Elysha Gill and Manisha Rajshaka, committed to a year-long mentoring programme for teenage girls through award-winning social enterprise Girls Out Loud. Each mentored a 'little sister' facing challenging circumstances, with a focus on improving their emotional wellbeing, self-belief and personal development.

> "Seeing my mentee become more confident in herself has been incredibly rewarding and has reinforced the value of taking the time to listen, support and encourage others where we can."

Manisha Rajshaka, Senior Associate



The Clink

Our 2026 colleague conference was catered in partnership with The Clink, a charity supporting prisoners to reduce reoffending through training in professional cookery and hospitality. Catering for the two-day event helped fund over 1,000 hours of community training for vulnerable adults at the charity's event production kitchens at HMP Downview.

FREETHS

Office spotlight: Glasgow

It may only be three years old, but colleagues in our Glasgow office have been quick to set up their own charity connections. One of the first was Launch Foods, a Glasgow-based charity tackling child food poverty through community cafés. As well as offering pro bono advice, last Christmas the team went all out collecting and donating toys to make the festive season sparkle for children supported by Launch.

Colleagues also took part in the Kiltwalk Big Stroll, a 14.5-mile hike in national dress, to support Down's Syndrome Scotland and the efforts of Alan McDonald, who founded Freeths' Scottish Litigation Practice and recently completed his Super Six – six half-marathons in six months – in aid of the charity.









The Sutton Trust

This year we began engaging with The Sutton Trust's network of high-achieving students from lower socio-economic backgrounds – as a result, 18% of students who secured places on our 2026 Insight Day and Legal Placement programmes were Sutton Trust students. The Legal Placement programme was particularly popular, with Sutton Trust students making up 38% of candidates. Over a fifth of these students progressed to assessment stages for training contracts, with offers to be confirmed.



Future talent



> Our aim is to raise aspirations, help level the playing field and provide support to talented students who may otherwise have limited exposure to legal careers and the opportunities available to them.

Katherine Pountney, Associate Director, HR

We are committed to highlighting opportunities and engaging students of all backgrounds in law. We recently developed a dedicated Future Talent Hub, providing accessible information, insights and resources to help students better understand how to pursue a career with Freeths. And we are proud to both host the annual Birmingham Black Lawyers Student Conference and exhibit at the organisation's Graduate Careers Fair, supported by members of our Rise Network.

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Young Professionals

In 2026 we deepened our relationship with Young Professionals, one of the UK's largest student networks. We launched an innovative new Year 12 and 13 virtual work experience pilot, aimed at engaging a diverse audience of young people who might struggle to attend a physical event. It was a great success, with 2,650 registrations and feedback averaging over 4.5 out of 5 stars.

And at this year's Young Professionals Summer Conference, Freeths Trainee Solicitor Apprentice Raeesah Akhtar addressed questions from some of the 4,000 aspiring apprentices. Raeesah took part in law panel sessions, where she discussed the apprenticeship route and what life is like as a solicitor apprentice.



Raeesah Akhtar, third from left, addresses aspiring apprentices at the Young Professionals Summer Conference.

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From bursary to traineeship

One of the first recipients of the Mukesh Patel Bursary, set up in memory of our late Leicester Managing Partner, has successfully gained her law degree and been offered a traineeship in the Leicester office.

Maymunah Valimia, awarded a First from the University of Leicester, will join Freeths in September 2027.

"We're delighted that someone who embodies everything the bursary stands for has done so well in her studies. She's already well known to the Leicester team and we're all looking forward to welcoming her." *Emma Anderson, Director*

Maymunah Valimia receives her degree from the University of Leicester.

Climate

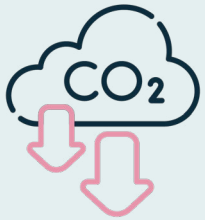


FREETHS

Climate

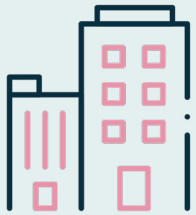
Reducing our environmental impact and supporting nature-positive solutions

HIGHLIGHTS



5.6%

Reduction in total emissions*



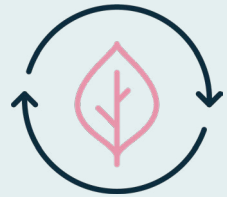
46.7%

Reduction in emissions from office energy use*



75%

Key suppliers with net zero targets



Net Zero

Net Zero Transition Plan published

*compared to FY24 baseline year

FREETHS

Achieving net zero

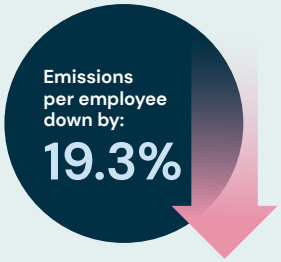
Our goal is to reach net zero by 2040, with near-term 2030 targets in place to maintain momentum and accountability.

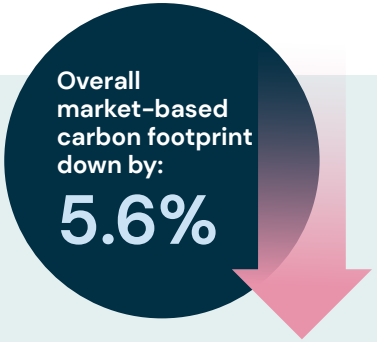
How are we doing?

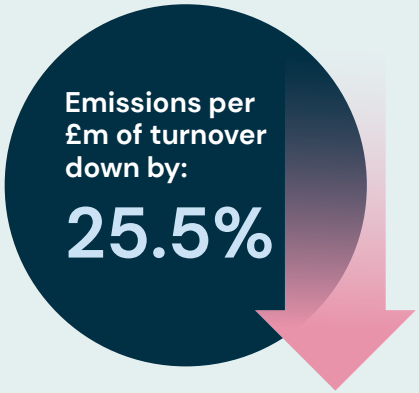
Against our FY24 baseline, we've reduced our overall market-based carbon footprint by 5.6% and office energy consumption by 22.5%. However, as our business grows, we have seen a slight overall increase in absolute emissions this year compared to FY25.

Although our primary focus remains on reducing absolute emissions, the firm's continued growth makes our intensity metrics an important indicator of progress. Since our baseline year, emissions per employee have fallen by 19.3% and emissions per £m of turnover by 25.5%, demonstrating an overall decoupling of business growth from carbon emissions.

Over the past year we've launched a comprehensive Net Zero Transition Plan, overseen by a newly established Net Zero Action Group. Implementation is being supported by enhanced data quality and governance, stronger supplier engagement and increased opportunities for our people to contribute to delivery.







Net Zero Transition Plan

Our Net Zero Transition Plan marks a major step forward in our long-term commitment to responsible business.

The plan sets out a clear pathway to achieving net zero across our value chain by 2040, underpinned by near- and long-term targets validated by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). It translates these commitments into action by identifying the areas where we can focus our efforts and have the greatest impact.

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Net Zero Transition Plan


Energy


Travel


Waste


Supply chain


Enabling actions

	Immediate (2026–2027)	Short-term (2028–2030)	Medium-term (2031–2035)	Long-term (2036–2040)
Decarbonisation	Improve office energy efficiency and introduce fit-out standards designed to minimise emissions	Implement energy upgrades	Work with landlords to implement larger infrastructure upgrades, removing reliance on gas	Maintain transparent review of targets, actions and processes
	Require emissions reporting from key suppliers	Pilot further smart travel solutions Embed net zero expectations in supply chain contracts	Work with suppliers to provide more granular data	Implement remaining operational measures
	Mandate regular reporting of all waste streams from waste management company	Ensure waste suppliers have clear net zero commitments		
Engagement	Build net zero awareness and training across the organisation	Deepen supplier collaboration and peer engagement for decarbonisation	Agree comprehensive net zero plans with key suppliers, embedding timelines and transparent reporting	Work in partnership with suppliers, industry peers and community stakeholders to accelerate progress towards net zero
Governance	Establish Board accountability and embed net zero into decision-making	Set measurable targets and track progress for employee travel	Continue to review skills and governance structures to ensure readiness for long-term targets	Ongoing monitoring and management of Net Zero Transition Plan implementation
	Align incentives with net zero objectives	Embed sustainability skills into relevant roles, prioritising leadership, procurement and facilities management	Mandate carbon disclosure in key supplier contracts	
Policies	Maintain renewable energy procurement	Introduce policy updates to reduce business travel	Confirm all relevant policies are in place and aligned with regulatory changes	Conduct comprehensive policy review to validate readiness for net zero
	Promote access to transport methods designed to minimise emissions	Introduce a zero waste to landfill policy across operations		
	Strengthen sustainable procurement and travel policies			

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Carbon footprint

We're pleased to report strong progress on operational emissions reduction during the reporting year. Scope 1 and 2 emissions and consumption have continued to fall, with the figures in our carbon footprint showing a promising reduction from our FY24 baseline.

We recognise that progress is not consistent across every category. Scope 3 remains our main challenge. Purchased goods and services remain our largest source of emissions, and supplier engagement will continue to be a key priority. Improved data capture has also given us a clearer picture of our footprint and where further action is needed.

Business travel emissions increased significantly, reflecting the growth of the firm and our expanding international activity. These are positive developments for the business, but they reinforce the need to decouple growth from emissions wherever possible.

The growing use of AI also presents an emerging emissions challenge, which we will continue to monitor as our understanding of its environmental impacts and the availability of reliable data evolve.

Carbon footprint comparison: FY24 (baseline year) vs FY26

Scope	Emission category	FY24 tCO_2e	FY25 tCO_2e	FY26 tCO_2e	FY26 proportion	Change from FY24
Scope 1*	Stationary fuels	313.0	270.6	230.4	4.4%	-26.4%
Scope 2**	Electricity	139.9	66.3	5.5	0.1%	-96.1%
	Heat and steam	6.5	6.1	8.9	0.2%	36.9%
Scope 3***	Category 1: purchased goods and services	3,644.9	3,584.8	3,626.8	68.9%	-0.5%
	Category 3: fuel- and energy-related activities	104.6	89.4	91.2	1.7%	-12.8%
	Category 4: upstream transportation and distribution	63.8	11.9	8.9	0.2%	-86.1%
	Category 5: waste	2.8	2.1	1.1	0.0%	-60.7%
	Category 6: business travel	264.2	293.6	392.4	7.5%	48.5%
	Category 7: employee commuting	1,037.3	817.7	896.8	17.0%	-13.5%
Total**		**5,577.0**	**5,142.5**	**5,262.0**		**-5.6%**

Intensity Ratios	FY24	FY25	FY26	Change from FY24
No. employees (FTE)	**984**	**1,135**	**1,146**	**16.5%**
Per employee (tCO_2e)	**5.7**	**4.5**	**4.6**	**-19.3%**
Turnover (£m)	**148.5**	**166.8**	**187.6**	**26.3%**
Per £m turnover (tCO_2e)	**37.6**	**30.8**	**28.0**	**-25.5%**

*Scope 1 emissions: direct emissions from sources owned or controlled by Freeths
**Scope 2 emissions (market-based): indirect emissions associated with purchased electricity, heat, steam and cooling
***Scope 3 emissions: indirect emissions throughout our value chain
**** Total (market-based): total emissions across Scope 1, 2 and 3

Next steps

Last year, we focused on gathering robust data and identifying our most significant sources of emissions. This has given us a much stronger understanding of our carbon footprint and a clear roadmap for reducing it.

Our next phase will focus on putting the Net Zero Transition Plan into action. We will work with teams across the business to deliver targeted reduction initiatives, embed sustainability into purchasing and wider decision-making, and reduce avoidable travel emissions, while recognising that some international travel will remain necessary.

Supplier engagement

As purchased goods and services represent our largest source of emissions, accounting for 68.9% of our FY26 footprint, supplier engagement remains a key priority. During 2026, we continued to work with strategic suppliers to better understand emissions, encourage target setting and support decarbonisation across our value chain. By year-end, 75% of our key suppliers had publicly committed to net zero targets.







> Achieving net zero will require collaboration across our people, our suppliers and our wider networks. By strengthening our data, governance and supplier engagement, and by supporting colleagues to make sustainable choices day-to-day, we are building the foundations for long-term, science-aligned change.

Maggie Stewart, Sustainability Manager

FREETHS

Growing engagement

Your Voice scores (see page 8) provide a clear starting point for measuring sustainability progress:

7.4 Sustainability engagement

180+ Climate pledges made by colleagues, turning individual actions into collective impact across the firm

Katarina Boys, Associate

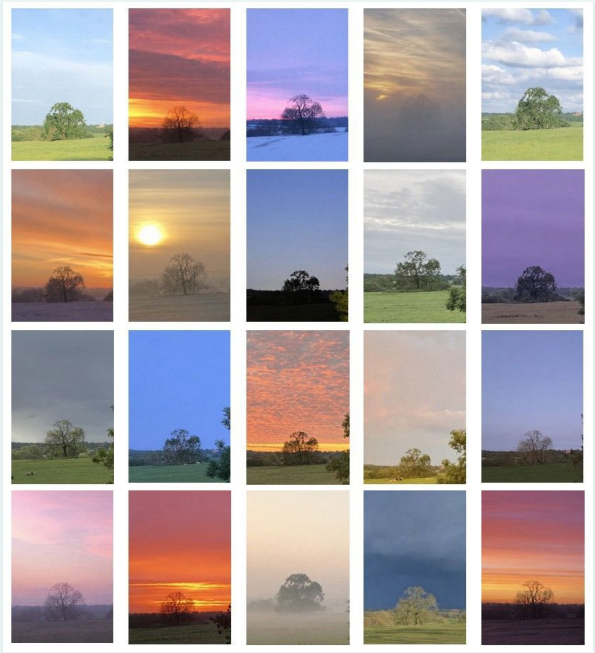


The winning entries from our World Environment Day photography competition.

Susan Wilson, Executive



60+ Entries received for our World Environment Day photography competition, showcasing colleagues' creativity and connection to nature and sustainability



Lorraine Davie, Head of Executive Assistants

We're offering Dr Bike sessions in offices, helping colleagues maintain their bikes and supporting more active, lower-carbon travel choices

Building sustainability capability in law

In 2026 Freeths contributed to a new sustainability training platform developed by Legal Charter 1.5 and the Sustainable Markets Initiative Legal Task Force. Shraiya Thapa, Senior Knowledge Lawyer, drew on her expertise to develop and deliver modules on energy storage and solar power, sharing practical insights into project structures, commercial considerations, risk allocation and lessons from practice. The free, self-paced platform is designed to help lawyers understand emerging sustainability risks and provide practical, transition-aligned advice.

We're also proud to be signatories to the Greener Litigation Pledge, which aims to reduce the environmental impacts of dispute resolution. We bring together legal professionals for conversations on, for example, making court bundling in civil courts more sustainable.

Greener Litigation

And we collaborated with members of the Legal Sustainability Alliance, producing a new guide, Putting the Sustainable in Procurement. This significant team effort involved over 20 firms working together to create a practical resource to support the legal sector in addressing its biggest emissions hotspot.

LSA Legal Sustainability Alliance

LEGAL CHARTER 1.5



> We recognise that reaching net zero will require innovation, investment and collective action, and we are dedicated to embedding sustainability goals into our decision-making processes, service delivery and valued relationships.

Mark Blakemore, Chief Operating Officer

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The Tree Council Partnership

This year we launched a new long-term partnership with The Tree Council, supporting its work to plant, protect and care for trees and hedgerows in communities across the UK.

The partnership creates opportunities for colleagues to get involved through hands-on volunteering in local communities. Already, colleagues from Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester and Nottingham have been out and about enhancing biodiversity in urban green spaces, supporting woodland restoration and helping manage invasive species. The strong uptake has been encouraging, giving colleagues a practical way to contribute to nature-positive action alongside our work to reduce emissions.



Clients

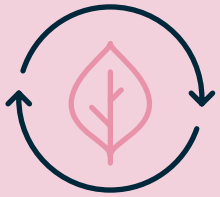


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Clients

Collaborating with values-aligned clients and suppliers to drive positive change

HIGHLIGHTS



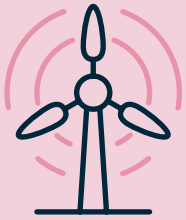
3 years

in a row ranked in Legal 500 Green Guide



100+

Lawyers in our dedicated clean energy, waste and sustainability sector group



Band 5

Ranking in Chambers UK-wide Energy & Natural Resources: Power, Renewables & Alternative Energy



227 million+

Combined audience reach for our Corporate Conscience Index report



ESG expertise

We are proud of the strong reputation we've built for specialist expertise in sustainability-focused work. Across our clean energy, natural capital and waste and sustainability practices, we partner with clients on innovative projects that support people, place and planet.

This includes:

- Advising on clean energy and low-carbon infrastructure projects
- Supporting natural capital and nature-positive initiatives
- Helping clients navigate waste, sustainability and environmental matters
- Sharing knowledge and insight to inspire wider sector change.

FREETHS

ARCTIC BASECAMP

Arctic Basecamp x Freeths

Climate change is often discussed as a future environmental challenge. In reality, it is an immediate business issue affecting resilience, strategy, supply chains, regulation and reputation.

To deepen understanding of these challenges, we partnered with not-for-profit Arctic Basecamp to bring together around 300 clients and colleagues for a climate risk webinar, exploring the global threats posed by climate change and their implications for organisations today.



The Only Way is Ethics

We continue to use lessons learned from the Post Office Horizon scandal in our Only Way is Ethics series, aiming to help General Counsel and in-house lawyers achieve better governance and ensure robust ethical practices.

During UK FinTech Week, James Hartley, the Freeths lawyer who led the landmark group litigation against the Post Office, shared his first-hand experience of the Horizon litigation, bringing into sharp focus the devastating human and organisational consequences when technology is allowed to operate without effective governance, challenge or oversight.

Above: James Hartley speaking at the 'Lessons from the Post Office Horizon Scandal for Financial Services' breakfast briefing.

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Women of the Year Awards

Women impacted by the Post Office Horizon scandal were collectively honoured with the Emmeline Pankhurst 'Woman of Achievement' award at the 2026 Women of the Year Awards, an event proudly sponsored by Freeths.

The women were joined in their celebrations by some of the Freeths lawyers who continue to represent postmasters in their fight for full redress.



The Freeths team was proud to present the Woman of Achievement award to women affected by Horizon.

FREETHS

Midland Heart

Our Social Housing team acts for Midland Heart, a Birmingham-based provider of affordable housing and community services to more than 70,000 customers.

Alongside our legal work, we support Midland Heart's wider social value and inclusion objectives. Our EDI team regularly meets with their newly restructured EDI leadership team, supporting them on rolling out new programmes and engaging colleagues. It is a mutually beneficial relationship: Midland Heart can draw on Freeths' experience and insight, while Freeths can sense-check priorities and challenges outside the legal sector.

> "Freeths has been an outstanding partner in supporting our ongoing inclusion ambitions. The collaboration has enabled us to learn from best practice and helped in building a stronger inclusion network."

Louise Mills, RISE Co-Chair, Midland Heart

Solar carports for LEGOLAND® Windsor

We recently advised Zestec Renewable Energy on the development of a solar carport scheme at LEGOLAND® Windsor. The innovative scheme shades and protects cars for customers and employees while generating over 1.1 million kWh of clean energy annually. The power generated from the solar carports will be used to power on-site facilities, such as the new Woodland Village.





Coralie McKeivor, Director (Real Estate), Ben Churchill, Director of Responsible Business and Hannah McKenna, Senior Business Development Manager, at PurposeFest.

Championing B Corp

We're proud to be part of the B Corp community and to help champion the movement among other businesses.

As well as hosting roundtables discussing issues from fair work to the evolution of the B Corp movement, in November 2025 we celebrated the 10th anniversary of B Corp in the UK alongside over 100 like-minded businesses, hosted by fellow B Corp Daylesford Organic. We also attended PurposeFest, a festival and networking event designed for businesses on the B Corp journey, participating in purpose-driven conversations around values, connection and authenticity.



Legal Team of the Year

Our Housebuilding and Strategic Land team won Legal Team of the Year at the Residential Property Week RESI Awards 2026, with judges highlighting our strong responsible business commitments.

> Congratulations to Freeths for their standout, best in-category submission. With strong B Corp credentials and clear ESG commitment supported by credible testimonials, it presents a compelling and well-rounded case. A clear winner to our judges.

RESI award judges

FREETHS

Legal 500 Green Ambassadors

Freeths' Waste and Sustainability Director Kirstin Roberts and Planning and Environment Director Richard Broadbent were named among the standout lawyers driving the sustainability agenda in legal services in the 2026 Legal 500 Green Ambassadors Guide – a global benchmark for excellence in sustainability and environmental law.



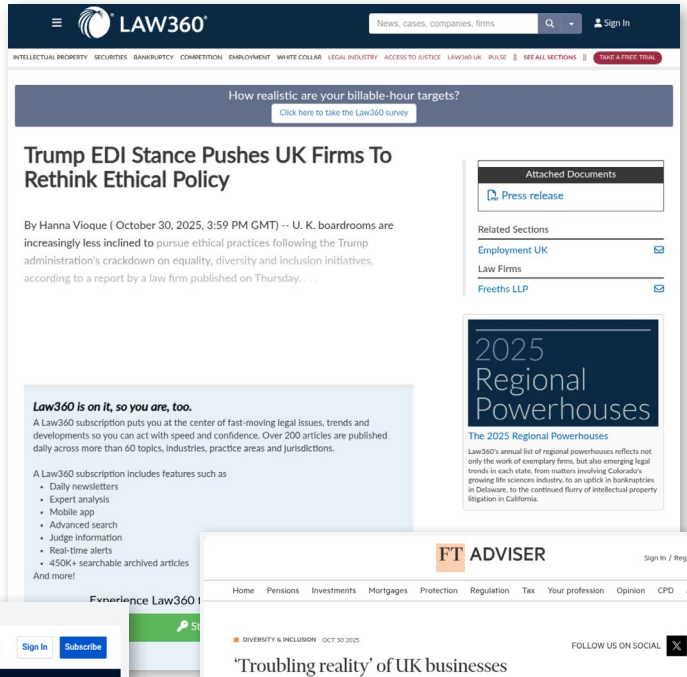
Sustainable regeneration in Cambridge

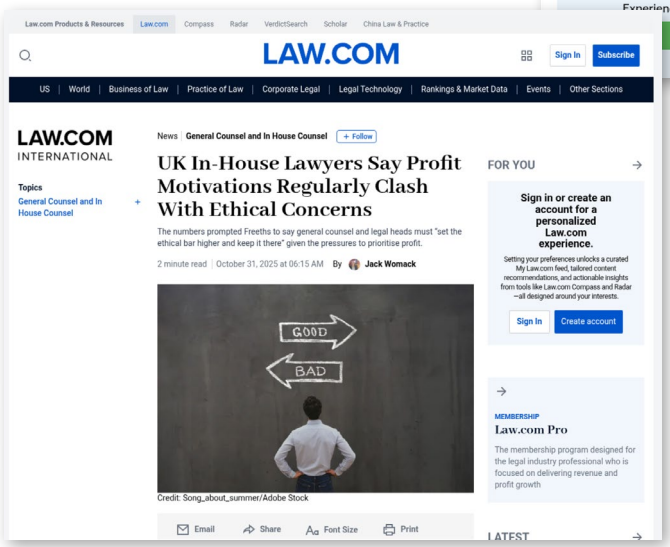
Freeths' Real Estate team advised Cambridge City Council on a mixed-use development supporting greener travel and urban regeneration. The project delivered a 227-room aparthotel targeting BREEAM Excellent standards, enhanced cycling and EV infrastructure, accessible parking and improved public spaces.



Corporate Conscience Index

We released our inaugural Corporate Conscience Index in October 2025, revealing that 85% of businesses reported turning down commercial opportunities on ethical grounds. The report was the first outcome of a multi-year project tracking UK business ethics amid a changing political and technological landscape. It secured a variety of high-profile media coverage including The Times, the Guardian and the Financial Times, helping to bring greater attention to the role of ethics and responsible business in commercial decision-making.









room2 York

We were pleased to advise Lamington Group on the funding of room2 York, a pioneering 'hometel' set to open in spring 2027.

As a fellow certified B Corp, Lamington is committed to delivering whole-life net zero buildings and aims to open 5,000 rooms and accommodation units by 2030, setting new standards in sustainable hospitality and real estate development.

Lamington's new 116-room property in the heart of York is its first in the north of England, marking a key milestone for the award-winning room2 brand. The site will feature sustainable design elements including reclaimed materials, solar panels and CO_2-controlled ventilation.

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National Inclusion Week

For National Inclusion Week, our EDI team delivered a client-facing session on Allyship in the Workplace, attracting over 100 attendees. Through practical, evidence-based insights, attendees considered how to move beyond passive support and create workplaces where inclusion, kindness and belonging become part of organisational habit, benefiting colleagues and organisations alike.

AI-enabled healthcare research

We supported University of Birmingham Enterprise on the launch of Dexter AI, a new company that uses AI to help healthcare researchers quickly analyse information from large sets of real-world data such as health records, claims data and private prescribing records. The platform has already been used in more than 150 studies across different areas of medicine, helping accelerate health research.



Client and supplier alignment

We take a risk-based and values-led approach to working with clients and suppliers. All new clients and matters are subject to an inception process that includes due diligence, compliance screening and ongoing monitoring. Matters presenting heightened ethical, environmental or human rights risks are subject to enhanced review, including escalation, where appropriate, to senior risk, compliance and responsible business leaders or to the Regulatory Risk and Ethics Committee. We commit to taking mitigating action where necessary, including modifying the scope of work, undertaking further investigation or declining instructions where risks cannot be satisfactorily addressed.

We have strengthened supply chain governance through a new Procurement Policy, which, alongside our Supplier Code of Conduct, sets clear expectations in areas including labour standards, modern slavery, environmental management, data protection, information security and health and safety. We expect suppliers to share our commitment to responsible business practices and encourage payment of the Real Living Wage, which is calculated annually based on the actual cost of living.



Policy engagement

Freeths does not currently engage in lobbying activities. As our responsible business approach evolves, we will continue to explore opportunities to contribute our expertise to policy discussions and collective action, where these are relevant to the legal sector and have the potential to support positive social or environmental outcomes. Any such engagement would be undertaken transparently and in line with our values and governance framework.

FREETHS



You can read more about our approach to responsible business here. We're always keen to hear thoughts and feedback; just email the team at responsiblebusiness@freeths.co.uk