

# cowshed



**United Nations**  
Global Compact

Communication on Progress  
2022



## *Statement of continued support*

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For a third consecutive year, Cowshed has actively supported the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption.

We continue to embed our previously reported achievements and have progressed further in implementing the societal goals of the Global Compact into our everyday business practices and client and team culture.

Our progress and commitments can be viewed by all on our website:  
<https://www.wearecowshed.co.uk/our-commitments/>

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Francis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Managing Director  
20.10.2022



## **Principle 1:**

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

## **Principle 2:**

make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

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# Human Rights

## *Human Rights: Key achievements*

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Cowshed is steadfast in our commitment to ensure everyone we work with and for is represented, respected and protected.

It is company policy to only work on projects and with people we believe contribute to our mission. We still scrutinise our clients, workforce and supply chain and turn down business or prospective employees who don't share or practice our values.

In the past year we have almost doubled our team. It is critical to the success of the business and our campaigns that every employee believes in and trusts our ethos.

With such a new team, we have taken this opportunity to conduct an review of our purpose. Over the course of this year, we have worked with a consultant to facilitate whole team and client workshops to listen to the people we work with to curate a purpose that belongs to the team today and drives our future vision. Our commitments to the UN's sustainability goals has been core to these discussions.

## *Human Rights: Key achievements*

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With a worsening cost of living crisis, we implemented a company-wide pay increases in our new financial year, awarded bonus payments and have provided emergency loans to employees adversely affected by the current financial climate.

The launch of our enhanced benefits scheme has received 100% take up by employees who are benefitting from equitable access to health care, GP and wellbeing services. People across the business have benefited from our enhanced parental, menopause and long term sickness policies to support during times of personal stress.

We have upheld our Blueprint Ally status and are working towards reapplication later this year. We have partnered with the Future Generations Commissioner to expand our minority ethnic internship to offer more paid opportunities for people experiencing barriers to starting a career in communications because of race, religion, age, sex or social background.

We are committed to combatting human rights abuses in the proactive choices we make. We continue to offer pro-bono and reduced rate services for clients such as UNHCR to make Wales and the UK a place of sanctuary. We are also delivering the communication strategy for the roll out of the new Welsh curriculum which supports early education on healthy relationships, as well as developing the strategy to eradicate gender-based violence in Wales.

## *Human Rights: Future ambitions*

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Cowshed has never been involved in any kind of human rights dispute and we are determined to make sure we never are – directly or indirectly.

We will reinforce our mission to be a fair and just business of choice by:

- Developing a new code of conduct following our purpose work which will set out our new vision and expectations of the people who work for and with us
- Communicating our new purpose with all clients and suppliers to ensure they understand our vision and commit to working within its boundaries
- Always working with people and companies who are transparent in their efforts to end social injustice, tackle miscarriages of human rights and promote equal opportunities
- Regaining Blueprint Ally status upon reapplication in the new year



### **Principle 3:**

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

### **Principle 4:**

the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour

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# Labour



## **Principle 5:**

the effective abolition of child labour; and

## **Principle 6:**

the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

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# Labour



## *Labour: Key achievements*

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Cowshed is committed to eliminating discrimination in both our role as an employer and as a provider of services. We do not tolerate any behaviours in our people, clients or supply chain that are ableist, sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic or discriminatory in any way.

We understand the importance of affording every person the dignity they deserve. All employees are free to join a union, have the right to collective bargaining and access to a fair hearing for any grievances.

We have a commitment to ensure our workforce is representative of the diverse community of the city we work in. We publish our diversity data annually <https://www.wearecowshed.co.uk/our-commitments/>

### **Investing in our people**

All employees have access to an uncapped training budget for personal and professional development based on their discipline and individual interest. This year, members of the team across the business received diversity training through the Blueprint and have worked together to shape five commitments which make up our DEI strategy for the next two years.

The whole team is on track to complete cowshed's ILM pathway which sets a baseline of good leadership expectations from junior to boardroom.

## *Labour: Key achievements*

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### **Transforming our policies and practices**

We have amended our employee handbook to marry it to our statement of commitment to our employees following the roll out of our progressive benefits package in late 2021. This work has been carried out by an inclusive employment expert to ensure our policies are not just legally and morally robust but can be understood and easily actioned by all.

We have upgraded our recruitment processes to include more inclusive practices such as multi-panel interviews and standardised questions. The implementation of our blind recruitment strategy will go live alongside the launch of our new brand purpose and subsequent website redevelopment.

### **Removing barriers to work**

We continue to pay ahead of the real living wage and have increased salaries significantly to support our people with the challenges of increased cost of living. Emergency loans are available and promoted internally to help cushion staff experiencing financial stress.

We are evolving our internship programme in partnership with Wales' Future Generations Commissioner to progress the careers of those who represent modern Wales across all protected characteristics.

## *Labour: Key achievements*

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### **Nurturing our people**

We have invested in Mental Health First Aid training for members at all levels of the business. 10 employees have received the training and have set up a steering group to ensure the wellbeing of our staff remains top priority. Details of the mental health support available to employees through our 24-hour helpline, mental health first aiders and wellbeing resources are prominently displayed in our office and on our intranet so it can be accessed by remote workers.

Our enhanced benefits package has supported staff with long term illness, new parenthood and bereavement. It has also attracted new talent from major cities to Wales – growing the team from 20 to 40 – and improved staff retention rates.

The whole team is involved in directing our new purpose as we grow. Our new vision and mission will be a collaborative result of their input, passion and purpose.



## *Labour: Future ambitions*

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Cowshed will always take immediate action to investigate and address discrimination in the workplace and our supply chain.

We will continue to drive our commitment to equal labour opportunities by:

- Reinvigorating our employee taskforces once our purpose work is complete to reflect our new vision and mission which has been developed on individual purpose and passion
- Continuing our work to gain an Investors in People certification
- Regaining Blueprint Ally status upon reapplication in the new year
- Developing a new code of conduct following our purpose work which will set out our new vision and expectations of the people who work for and with us
- Communicating our new purpose with all clients and suppliers to ensure they understand our vision and commit to working within its boundaries



## **Principle 7:**

support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;

## **Principle 8:**

undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

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# Environment



## **Principle 9:**

encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

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# Environment



## *Environment: Key achievements*

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Cowshed has always made environmentally positive choices. This year we have doubled down on these commitments and work has begun to consolidate these actions and develop an ESG strategy that works for the business.

To support her in this work, our key focus for 2021/22 has been to embed the role of our Sustainability Director and invest in upskilling her through learning and training opportunities.

This new role will ensure we benchmark and understand our consumption and carbon impact so we can rapidly progress with our ambitions for carbon neutrality and positivity in our local communities across all aspects of our services – internally and in our campaigns. An impact review is underway with the support of environmentally passionate members of the team.

We follow the Government's Green Claims Code and have maintained our Level 2 Green Dragon Environmental Standard.

A full audit of our IT systems is ongoing by an external expert with the brief to investigate and implement more environmentally friendly technologies. This work will also bring us closer to gaining ISO 14001 EMS standard.

We want to share best practice in Wales and have launched the Good Business Award with the Fast Growth 50 to celebrate companies putting planet and people first.

## *Environment: Future ambitions*

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We recognise the magnitude and urgency to tackle the climate crisis and our people are passionate about taking positive action.

Our plans, driven by our Sustainability Director and environmental champions include:

- Analysing our footprint and recommending a series of actions to improve our offsetting practices and local impact by the end of the financial year
- Undertaking further training such as carbon literacy and courses provided by the IEMA
- Moving closer to becoming ISO 14001 EMS and B-Corp accredited
- Providing staff training and recommendations on environmentally positive pension investing



## **Principle 10:**

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

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# Anti-corruption



## *Anti-corruption: Key achievements*

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Cowshed continues to adhere to the UN's anti-corruption call to action to eliminate corruption and promote fair competition in the marketplace.

This year, we took the number one spot on Welsh Government's National Procurement Framework not just because of our experience in creating campaigns that work but because of our evidenced social values and transparent business practices.

We are a signatory of Welsh Government's Ethical Supply Chain and continue to expand our network of like-minded suppliers in Wales, paying them above average and on time, always.

To ensure financial best practice we have developed a more robust financial policy and enhanced our supplier agreements which outline our expectations and commitments to fair, honest work.

We have a well established put a whistleblowing policy, champion and anonymous helpline in place.

We proactively choose clients which tackle corrupt behaviour and have recently launched a campaign to stop loan sharks and reduce the devastating affects of illegal money lending.

## *Anti-corruption: Future ambitions*

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Cowshed rejects bribery and would never extort a colleague, client or supplier.

Given the contained location and size of our supplier network, we have assessed the risk of corruption as low. However, we always hold ourselves accountable and will uphold our role as UN's anti-corruption signatory by:

- Ensuring all new team members understand the importance of our procurement and financial processes and requirements of our supplier agreements
- Developing a new code of conduct following our purpose work which will set out our renewed expectations of the people who work for and with us





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