

# Impact Report

2023 - 2024

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FIRE  
START



matchstick  
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better business  
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Certified  
B  
Corporation™

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# A note from our Directors



## // WELCOME TO A LOOK BACK ON OUR IMPACT THROUGH 2023-2024

It's safe to say that the past year has presented a lot of challenges that have impacted our work, our wellbeing, and our finances. Whilst we have been buoyed by a growth of interest in purpose-driven work and values, we have also been hit by reduced budgets, higher costs, and uncertainty.

Last year, we recognised that there was more we could be doing to reduce our negative impact on the environment and increase our positive impact. So, we're glad to say that we have made progress here. In particular, we would like to spotlight our work with Merseyside Waste and Recycling Authority and the Circular Economy Club with our cross-sector Firestarters programme.

We made some headway on our goals for last year but there were some areas where we had to reassess what would be achievable. We made a lot of progress in our plans to support our team, however we faced difficult decisions about how sustainable it would be to maintain the team size in the current market conditions.

Our ambition for 2024–2025 is to reposition Matchstick Creative in a lean and sustainable way. Our focus is on brand and transformational strategies to provide greater positive social and environmental impact to the projects and organisations we partner with.

**Our mission for 2024–2025 is to engage in earlier strategic relationships to amplify our impact further downstream.**

**We'd like to thank our team and everyone who has helped us through this year.**

**THANK YOU,  
RUTH + GREG**



# Evolution of B Corp standards

B Lab is in the process of transforming and developing new standards. The breadth the standards will cover, along with a shift in foundational, performance-related, and contextual standards will help us define more tangible goals to increase our positive impact.

The expectation is that these will become clearer prior to our recertification date. However, there is still some uncertainty around exactly how and when these standards will come into play. For now, we are continuing to work towards our previous goals, whilst keeping in mind how this landscape will change towards foundational and performance standards.

## **B Corp Impact Score: 94.7**

We have previously stated that our aim for recertification in 2025 is to surpass a score of 100 on the B Impact Assessment.

Our commitment to B Corp is the same, however we will set new, ambitious targets once the evolution of standards has been finalised.

# Our B Corp Impact Score

## Areas for improvement

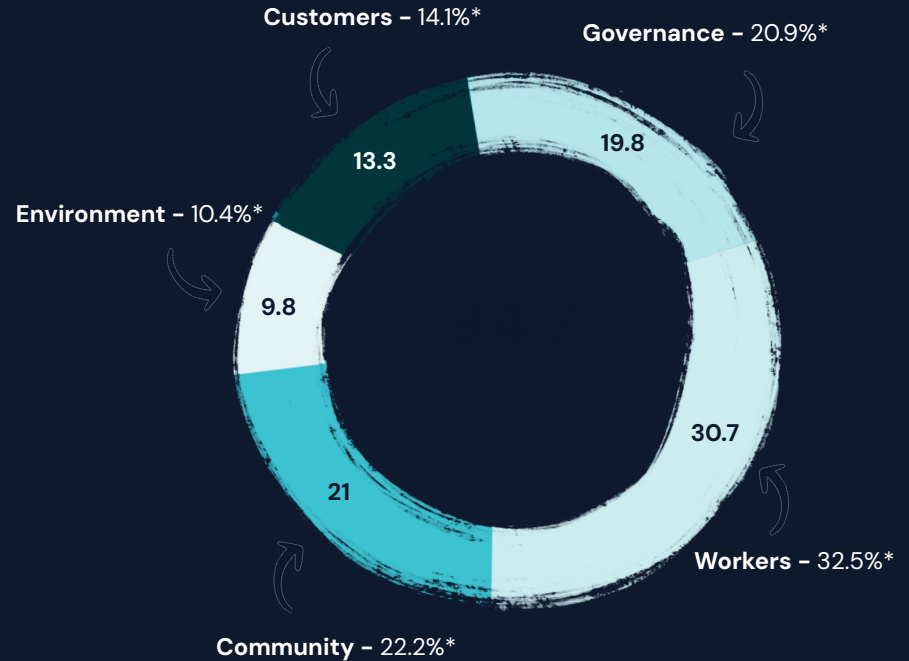
We aim to improve our scores across each of the five core areas: Governance, Workers, Community, Environment, and Customers.

The areas where we expect to see the greatest improvements are within our community work, our impact on the environment, and the impact of our work with customers and the diverse communities they serve.

**Certification date:** 19th June 2022

\* percentage of total B Corp score total

\*\* as previously published in our 2022–2023 Impact Report



# Governance

## Ethics, transparency, and positive impact

We set some ambitious Governance goals for 2023, looking at how we can improve our policies towards staff, our management practices, and our financial processes.

**With the help of partners, we achieved some major process, policy and practice improvements.**



# Governance

## What we achieved last year

- ★ **Developed our Staff Handbook policies** to ensure they represent our values
- ★ **Carried out management training** to develop leadership and management skills
- ★ **Improved financial processes** to understand where finances are best used
- ★ **Built strategic associate partnerships** with inspirational people in the Liverpool City Region (LCR)
- ★ **Encouraged staff engagement** and co-creation, creating a collaborative work environment that reflects our Matchsticks

## Review 23-24

### How we did it

We worked extensively with Liz Edwards from Headlands People Projects to develop our new Team Handbook, Training Plan, and Performance Check-ins, looking at where we could improve and where we could go beyond.

Ruth and Greg underwent management training through the Gather programme with Form and Ben Davies; the Help to Grow Management course from the Small Business Charter and University of Liverpool; and the Growth Catalyst programme from the University of Liverpool.

We also developed our relationship with Adding Value accountants to further develop pragmatic financial processes and models to improve our cash flow forecasting and bookkeeping processes.

# Governance

## Aims for next year

### Peer and advisory mentors

We have shifted our thinking away from a specific advisory board. Given the way that we are repositioning the business, we are focusing on having strategic ongoing relationships with peers and leaders, bringing in specific expertise where appropriate.

### Encouraging engagement

Our team is moving towards more senior associate positions and collaborative working.

The next year or so will see us developing and deepening those relationships, bringing our values further into those partnerships.

### Continue process improvement

We intend to continue our approach to process improvements, with a view to gaining greater insights into working fairly, efficiently, and to optimise our positive impact.



# Workers

## Supporting the workforce

The market is changing our approach to staffing, contractors, and partnerships.

We are committed to providing safe and stable work for our team and partner relationships.



# Workers

## Review 23–24

### 10 What we achieved last year

- ★ **Organised mental health and well-being training** for our team
- ★ **Improved career development** opportunities to create clarity around employee career paths
- ★ **Coordinated a 2023 training plan** and calendar to provide more development opportunities
- ★ **Involved the team in more strategic conversations** to ensure our mission and values align with those of our team

### How we did it

We arranged well-being training for everyone and provided Mental Health First Aid training for three of our team.

We improved our performance review process and scheduled structured conversations with staff around career development and progression.

We worked with Headlands People Projects to develop a new training plan, covering: Core training, creative craft, additional skills, development paths, and 'afternoon learning' sessions.

We included the full team in our retrospective sessions, and provided opportunities to help team members steer our strategic decisions, values, and activity.

# Workers

## Aims for next year

### Depth over growth

Growing a larger team feels unsustainable in the current market, so we intend to only hire in strategic positions where there is a long-term business-case to do so. We will continue to develop our freelance and partner relationships to enable us to flex safely dependant on need.

### Health and wellbeing

We intend to bolster our commitment to health and wellbeing with fitness memberships, access to talking therapies and improved access to health services.

### Four-day working week

We have trialled a four-day working week and will commit to this long-term. We've had mixed results with this process and feel that flexible working is a better way to sum up our approach. We're ultimately trying to cut down working hours to enable more work life balance.

# Community

## Our local, national, and international community

We will continue to work in our community across the Liverpool City Region and plan to build how we develop our community across the UK and the wider world through our work and impact.



# Community

## Review 23–24

### What we achieved last year

- ★ **Created more opportunities for community impact** through our Firestarters network
- ★ **Ruth became the Deputy Chair of the LCR Business & Enterprise Board** to have a say in how we can positively impact our local businesses & community
- ★ **Greg became co-chair of the newly established B Local Liverpool, a purpose-driven hub** for local business leaders to help support them in carrying out more purposeful business

### How we did it


We set out a new plan for our Firestarters programme and looked at how we could partner with organisations to expand our reach. Alongside our usual Firestarters-style events we developed a Firestarters series around the circular economy, and began the process of redefining what Firestarters can be for the future.

In lieu of a BID company board, Ruth became Deputy Chair of the Business and Enterprise Board for LCR to be a voice for independent businesses with social purpose.

Greg became co-chair of the B Local Liverpool group, set up to provide support for local businesses on their B Corp journey.

# Community

## Aims for next year



### The next generation of Firestarters

We aim to bring new strands to our Firestarters programme, expanding on one-off events and series with intimate offerings such as Firestarters Feasts and Firestarters Camp.

### More purposeful connections

We are established as leaders for purposeful work, our next step is to develop closer relationships between strategic decision-makers and the communities they serve.

### Better Business Act coalition

We co-hosted an event for the Better Business Act which aims to create an accountability structure for businesses to the communities they serve, beyond simply increasing profits for the owners or shareholders.

# Environment

## The world and our impact on it

This year has seen us looking at creative ways to expand on our commitment to the environment.

Whether that's through enabling strategic conversations amongst businesses, public sector leaders, and the community; or through looking at the impact our digital work has on our carbon footprint. We are committed to both improving our positive impact on the environment and reducing our negative impact.



# Environment

## What we achieved last year

- ★ Increased our commitment and advocacy to 2030 Net Zero Carbon and the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- ★ Ruth's represented the interests of Liverpool City Region at a key event at The House of Commons discussing LCR's Net Zero Plan. She offered her take on how it supports SMEs and what more could be done to help them become part of the Net Zero conversation.
- ★ **Better Business Act Coalition event** to push for more accountability in businesses across the region
- ★ **We made plans to improve networking opportunities** for sustainability and environmental advocates and leaders across LCR through People Planet Pint: Liverpool
- ★ **We actively pursued projects supporting environmental conversations**, such as our Circular Culture series with MRWA and through designing publications and plans supporting Zero Waste initiatives

## Review 23-24

### How we did it

During Global Goals Week 2023 we made a public commitment towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

#### Specifically goals 11 and 12:

- Sustainable cities and communities
- Responsible consumption and production

We are working with Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority to promote and develop Zero Waste projects across LCR. Ruth is advocating for better transport and green initiatives.

We used our positions on the LCR Business & Enterprise Board, B Local Liverpool, and People Planet Pint: Liverpool to advocate for improved environmental action and practices.



# Environment

## Aims for next year

### People Planet Pint

Greg is committed to co-hosting and building engaging bi-monthly People Planet Pint events for Liverpool to foster stronger connections between businesses, the public sector and community organisers to discuss environmental and sustainability initiatives.

### Environmental audit

An audit of the environmental impact of our digital services: we need to understand the extent of our impact better in order for us to make real progress.

### A greener website

Our brand repositioning will see us creating a new website, alongside accessibility improvements, we will be developing a 'greener' website and exploring more sustainable email and website analytic platforms.

# Customers

## Our Impact Business Model

It is a difficult time in our sector with pressures coming from both increased costs and reductions in budgets.

Here we are looking at how to amplify the positive impact of our customers whilst providing a sustainable business model for the future.



# Customers

## Review 23–24

### What we achieved last year

- ★ **Set up stakeholder consultations** with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Liverpool City Council, and Chambers of Commerce
- ★ **Completed our Growth for Good series**, gathering Liverpool City Region business leaders together
- ★ **Began working with LCR Combined Authority's Growth Platform on a 'Good Growth Guidelines'** document Liverpool City Region businesses

### What we did

Our plans to develop a peer group for Firestarters has been delayed due to external pressures, however we have been working with a business consultant to help us develop a stronger Firestarters offering for next year.

We have delivered stakeholder engagement sessions with local authorities and strategic regional organisations to help understand and support the developing landscape for LCR.

We completed our Growth for Good series and are currently developing the next phase of activity based upon this: The Good Growth Guidelines for ethical and sustainable business across the Liverpool City Region.

# Customers

## The future of our customers



### Research

Research how to create greater impact by beginning our strategic work earlier upstream.

### Reposition

Reposition the business to capture larger organisations and help them transform in ethical and sustainable ways.

### Partnership

Work in partnership with organisations such as Kindred LCR to create a 'purpose directory' of sustainable businesses and contacts, to generate pathways to collaborative projects and working relationships across the Liverpool City Region

# Good Growth for the win

## Encouraging Good Growth in every conversation

Through our continued partnership with Growth Platform, we've been able to lead the way on the conversation around Good Growth. Through our [series of stakeholder engagement events in 2023](#) to the soon-to-be-released **Good Growth Guidelines coming in 2024**, Good Growth is the topic we're leading the charge on.

People are obsessed with growth when it comes to business, but our first question is always; **What kind of growth?** We've yet to see an example of high-speed growth where the fallout hasn't been the environment or people. The pressures in these businesses can be unsustainable, so we want to challenge the notion of growth into a more sustainable model where

growth is still encouraged, but not at the cost of people's wellbeing, the planet's resources or the sanity of its leaders.

Good Growth will be our rallying cry over the next few years and will shape every decision we make. We're going to share resources so you can understand how to introduce good growth into your businesses, we'll be putting on local events that bring these ideas to life and we'll be hosting webinars to get the message out there.

Good Growth is better for everyone, so let's all get behind it and change what business looks like, for good.

# Firestarters Community

## Positive community action in the Liverpool City Region

Firestarters is a community of changemakers putting purpose before profit in the LCR.

We founded Firestarters to connect people from the private, public, and third sectors and encourage positive action in the region. We do this through live events, actionable next steps and community accountability.

**Firestarters is community lighter fuel.**



# Firestarters Community



Throughout 2023 and 2024, our Firestarters initiative has engaged more and more people, and provided paid work for diverse speakers and purpose-driven organisations. Take a look at some of the key moments from the last year of Firestarters.

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## Events for the Circular Culture series

Alongside Merseyside Recycling & Waste Authority, we hosted events on how to embed circular economy approaches into the Manufacturing, Technology, and Food & Hospitality sectors.

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## Event on how AI could benefit the NHS

We partnered with local experts, The Wellbeing Doctors to deliver a challenging discussion around the potential benefits and concerns around using artificial intelligence in NHS services

1<sup>st</sup>

## Our first global-facing virtual event for Global Goals Week 2023

As part of our commitment to the UN SDGs, we hosted a virtual event in Global Goals Week and made our public commitment towards six of the global goals

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## 'Growth for Good' stakeholder engagement event

A follow-up to our successful 'Growth for Good' series, we engaged with the six local chambers of commerce and other local authority groups

# Circular Culture

## Purpose-driven business support events

The 'Circular Culture' series was a special programme of **Firestarters** events in partnership with **MRWA and the Circular Economy Club**.

Through the series, we aimed to support businesses in the city region who were looking to learn from expert speakers, gather strategic insights and have the opportunity to grow their network with purpose-driven people.





# Our approach

## What was the Circular Culture series?

The Circular Culture series consisted of three events, hosted across different areas of the LCR, bringing together industry leaders and sustainability experts to facilitate important conversations.

With each event focused on a different sector, the events explored how the circular economy can benefit organisations on a local and national scale, and how it can lead to adopting more sustainable and ethical approaches to business.



## Core event themes

### Manufacturing:

Making and building a better world

### Technology:

Pioneering sustainable innovation

### Food & Hospitality:

Imagining more sustainable approaches

# Our impact

At each event, we created **actionable next steps** to provide insight for what business support can look like for the future of the region.

These steps were based on quotes, comments and insights from attendees, reflecting exactly what our community want to see happen in the future.

## But, what was the result?



## 3 Local independent venues

We supported unique and local independent venues across the boroughs of the LCR, so attendees could see first-hand the benefits of a circular approach to the economy and sustainability across the LCR.

## 50+ Engaged attendees

We engaged with a diverse audience of over 50 business leaders, community organisers, hearing their thoughts on the circular economy and the challenges we face, and sharing best-practices and insights to help instill circular approaches in new organisations.

## 11 Diverse, expert speakers

We invited business owners, industry leaders, and community organisers to steer our sessions, sharing their insights with attendees and start important conversations with our Firestarters community.

# Thank you



**Want support with your own impactful project?**

Whether you're looking to create engaging content, build a seamless experience for your audience, or want to better understand your purpose as an organisation, our team can help.

Reach out to us at

[hey@matchstickcreative.co.uk](mailto:hey@matchstickcreative.co.uk) to see how we can work together to have a positive impact.



  @heymatchstick

[hey@matchstickcreative.co.uk](mailto:hey@matchstickcreative.co.uk)  
[matchstickcreative.co.uk](http://matchstickcreative.co.uk)