



POSITIVE IMPACT REPORT

2023/24
ANNUAL REVIEW

Walker Morris LLP is a commercial law firm that provides tailored, long-term, strategic advice to multinational companies, financial sponsors and funds, and publicly listed and private companies around the world.

Our diverse collection of lawyers and professionals carry an entrepreneurial spirit and work incredibly hard to help clients forge their own paths and achieve greater success.



Introduction

This is our second annual Positive Impact Report. Last year, we focused on accountability. For the first time, we published our targets and ambitions. We wanted to be transparent about our aims and our progress. Over the last 12 months, we've used the ambitions from our first report to shape what we've done.

This year, we still want you to hold us accountable. But we've learned. This isn't a Positive Action Report. It's a Positive Impact Report. Our focus this year is making sure that our goals and plans actually make a difference outside our firm, not just within it.

We commit to making an impact through positive and meaningful action. Continue to question and challenge us, and we'll continue to challenge ourselves.



We've made some real progress this year, but we're not complacent. We can always be better.”

MALCOLM SIMPSON,
MANAGING PARTNER

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What drives us?

Purpose

This is why we're here. It's how we have a positive impact on our people, our clients and our community.

We're all unique. We all have our own goals and visions for what we want our lives to look like.

Our firm encourages you to pursue those goals and fights alongside you to help you achieve them. We want you to... **forge your own path.**

Values

Our values are non-negotiable guiding beliefs. They help us fulfil our purpose and make it clear what we expect of our people.

Embrace the fact everyone is different and unique.

You can be serious without wearing a suit.

Never lose sight of the bigger picture.

Two heads are better than one.

Take the bull by the horns.

We win & lose together.



Behaviours

Our values in action. Our behaviours define how our people interact with one another and with clients.

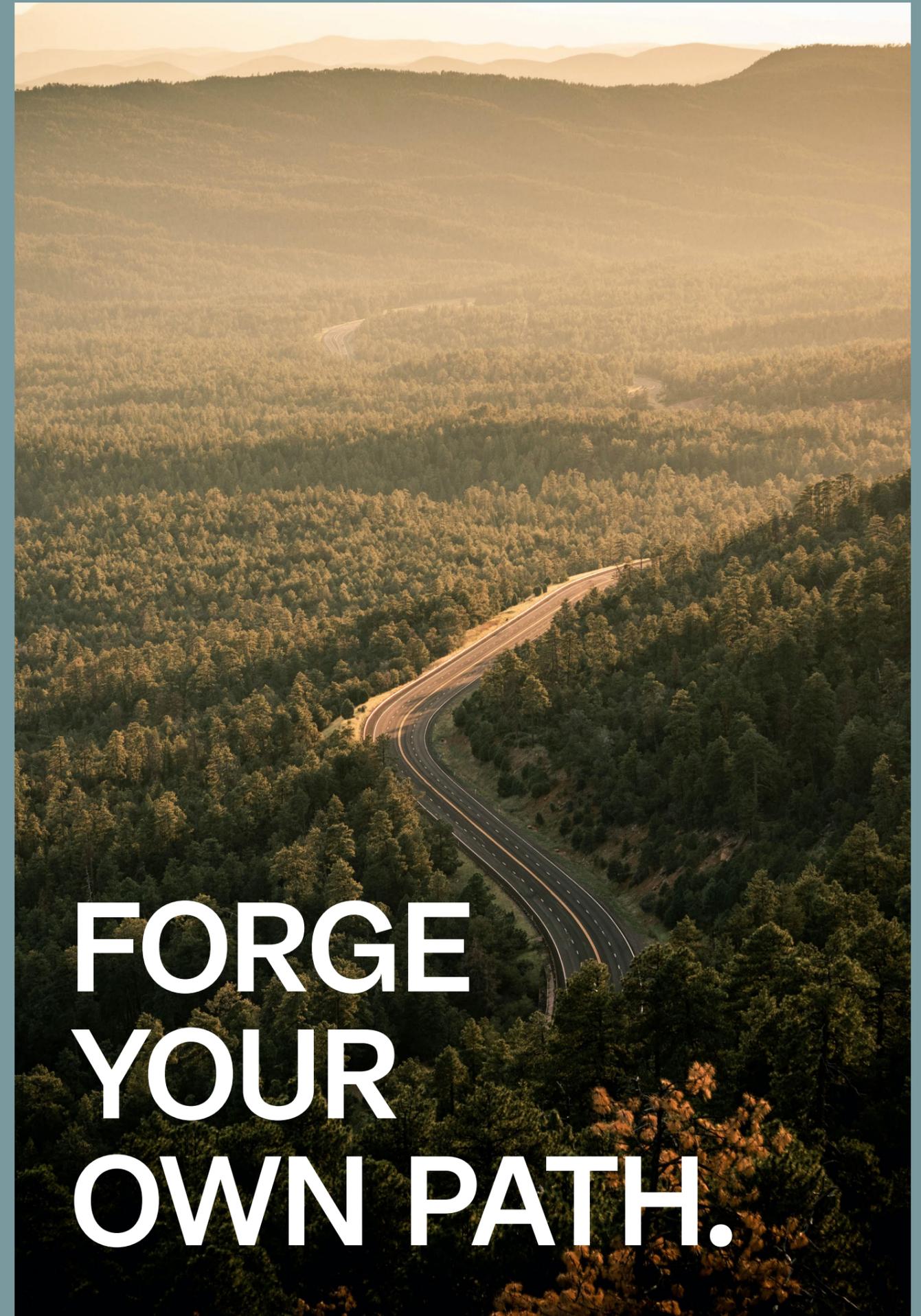
Be positive and enterprising.

Be curious and ambitious.

Be inclusive and kind.

Be loyal.

Be honest.



Environment

Our vision

We'll achieve Net Zero by 2040, and be a recognised influencer for positive change in our community.

Story so far

We've continued to build on the positive steps taken in recent years to reduce our environmental impact.

In the last 12 months, we've renewed our zero carbon electricity supply contract, continued to work on initiatives to reduce our energy consumption and worked with our waste contractors to reach 'zero waste to landfill'.

Here's what we've done so far:

- Started our Net Zero journey and engaged SLR, a Net Zero specialist consultancy, to help us formulate our plan and establish our approach to building a robust and validated Net Zero Strategy.
- Gathered and reviewed our data to calculate our Scope 1 & 2 direct emissions and our Scope 3 supply chain emissions. This has allowed us to make significant progress in modelling our short/medium and long term science-based targets.
- Developed a plan to achieve Net Zero by 2040 - 10 years ahead of the UK Government's target to decarbonise all sectors of the UK economy. The plan will shortly be submitted to the Science Based Targets initiative for approval and will also include a commitment to reduce emissions by 42% by 2030.



Our journey to Net Zero impacts all areas of our business, including premises, supply chain, business processes and more. Our targets are challenging but achievable.

In the last 12 months, we've also:

- Introduced a staff EV salary sacrifice scheme.
- Launched our car sharing scheme, providing a parking space for anyone bringing at least one colleague with them into the office.

This year's ambitions

- By November this year, we'll have obtained SBTi validation of our Net Zero strategy.

This validation ensures our strategy stands up to scrutiny and is in line with the GHG protocol. SBTi is the leading platform providing guidance on how companies can set a robust Net Zero strategy, which is in line with the IPCC's science based global Net Zero pathway not to exceed 1.5 degrees of global warming.

- Once validated by SBTi, we'll continue to follow the strategy, adjusting it as our business changes, we adopt new initiatives or invest in new technology.
- We'll have published our full Net Zero strategy, re-affirming our commitment to meeting our Net Zero targets, publishing annual updates as we review our progress.
- We'll be changing our partner car policy, encouraging the use of EVs and/or plug-in hybrid vehicles.



Sustainability Week

This year saw the launch of our first Sustainability Week. Organised by our ESG forum, we took part in various activities to raise awareness about environmental responsibility and promote sustainable practices within our firm.



Social: Equality, inclusion & diversity

Our vision

We'll increase the diversity of our workforce, provide opportunity for all, and make everyone feel they can be their whole selves at work.

Story so far

Current stats



Performance against aims:

- We're aiming for a partner intake that's at least 40% female each year. This year 60% of our partner intake was female and we want to continue on this positive note.
- We're aiming to have at least 15% of our workforce from an racial minority. In the past year we've increased the percentage of employees from a racial minority background from 8% to 10%.



Here are some of the things we've achieved over the last year:

- Introduced contextual recruitment software to focus on skills over educational achievement for our 2025 intake of trainee solicitors.
- Introduced a disability forum that looks at physical and neurodiversity. We've also signed up to the government-backed Disability Confident initiative.
- Started a move towards a 'culture build, not culture fit' policy with sessions on all areas of diversity, including neurodiversity and transgender awareness.
- Started mandatory diversity training beginning at the top with partners. The training has been written and delivered internally, so is tailored to our firm.
- Introduced solicitor apprenticeships starting in September 2023, making legal careers more accessible.
- Signed up to the Model Diversity Survey

(MDS) for clients. The MDS is a large internal data collection exercise we undertake annually to measure how diverse the firm is across all levels.

- Held progression workshops to demystify partnership and encourage more women into partnership, together with a mentoring programme to aid ambition.
- Appointed a full-time specialist, Jess Harvey, to lead our inclusivity and diversity strategy and improve representation within the workforce.
- Launched a 10-week paid paternity leave policy.

This year's ambitions

We want to keep exploring the ways we can improve our approach to equality, inclusion & diversity including:

- Cascading mandatory diversity training to all staff.
- Using specialised diversity jobs boards for recruitment.
- Introducing blind recruitment across all roles.
- Improving our reverse mentoring scheme for its third iteration.
- Signing up to the Women in Law Pledge.



I'm incredibly passionate about being an Executive Committee member of Stronger Together, a network of the 'big 6' law firms and 'big 4' accountancy firms in Leeds which was formed in 2022. The network aims to improve racial diversity in the Leeds' professional services sector.

As an Asian woman wearing a headscarf and qualifying as a lawyer in the 2000's, I had never met a lawyer who looked like me and I saw no examples of people like me who had succeeded in corporate law. I have no doubt that the lack of relatable role models continues to deter candidates from certain backgrounds.

The network enables young, ethnically diverse lawyers and accountants from different firms to connect with each other. It means there is greater visibility of successful ethnically diverse role models, which I feel is incredibly important to the recruitment and retention of ethnically diverse staff.

Winning the Legal 500 Northern Powerhouse award for diversity initiative of the year was a particular highlight."

SHABANA MUNEER
DIRECTOR

Social: Our people

Our vision

We'll make employees feel cared for by providing the tools to develop a sustainable career, and making sure those tools are

used to both develop each individual to their unique potential, as well as progressing the firm's outcomes for clients.

We launched Sustainable Careers

At Walker Morris, we give our people the opportunities and freedom to forge their own path, plus the care and support to unlock their potential in a way that's right for them. We want our people to have fulfilling, long-term careers here.

At the end of 2022, we launched Sustainable Careers. We held a two-day event in our office to make sure everyone knows the opportunities and support available. Our approach — PATH — centres around:

- Personality – creating meaningful experiences that encourage connection and belonging, through forums, networks, collaborative working groups and our strong sense of camaraderie.

- Ambition – our size and structure means we offer development opportunities that other firms don't.
- Trust – our people have equity of opportunity and the freedom to make decisions about the impact they want to make and the best way in which to work.
- Humanity – we value the differences between our people and put their wellbeing first.

This year, we were recognised by the International Management Excellence Awards for Best Sustaining Culture. We'll continue to develop our employee offer in such a way as to really make a difference to those who work here at Walker Morris.



We've dedicated time and energy into wellbeing and our new wellbeing calendar including:

- Financial wellbeing – supporting financial resilience through payroll savings scheme and pensions workshops.
- Physical wellbeing – encouraging positive health decisions through flu vouchers, employee health checks, step challenges, nutrition talks and menopause talks.
- Social wellbeing – bringing people together through training, events and coffee roulette.
- Emotional wellbeing – supporting our people with mental health support, training for managers, anxiety workshops and resilience workshops.

This year's ambitions

To bring sustainable careers to life, we held an in-depth survey of all our staff. To reflect the results we will:

- Double our wellbeing budget.

- Build transparent career paths for non-legal roles and publish them.
- Hold leadership training sessions for managers to help career progression.
- Have quarterly check-ins between the People & Culture team and Partners for 2-way communication and support for our leaders.
- Introduce a new learning management system to aid blended learning and increase the content of available training to all.
- Revamp our induction for newly qualified solicitors so they are better informed of their career progression opportunities from an early stage.
- Continue with our career progression workshops for lawyers.
- Clarify our Business Services bonus scheme.

Social: Our community

Our vision

We'll understand the obstacles people in our community may face, and work to make sure everyone has the best chance to achieve the life to which they aspire.

Story so far

As a significant employer in the area, we're committed to doing what we can to have a positive impact on the community by raising aspirations in the area's young people. Through our continuing work in the community, we're tackling the social barriers faced by many students in our local area.

This year, we've built upon our existing relationship with the Ahead Partnership, our partner in this work. We've continued to support Bishop Young Academy in Leeds. Our work has focused on raising aspirations and providing information relating to opportunities to students that they may not have considered.



Events this year have included:

- Interview practice – our team of volunteers met with students to undertake mock interviews. Practising interview skills is invaluable to students as opportunities to do so can be very rare.
- Group mentoring – our volunteers were paired with mentees from the school to deliver a set of mentoring sessions over a 4-week period. These sessions, built around our core values, were focused on increasing the students' knowledge of the opportunities available to them.
- A speed networking session – our volunteers met 1-2-1 with students to give them a chance to ask questions and practise their interview skills.



This mentoring programme really helped my confidence and teamwork.”

**BISHOP YOUNG ACADEMY
STUDENT FEEDBACK**



We also conducted a survey of 2,000 14-18 year olds to understand their perception of careers in law. The findings will help us shape our work in the community and understand the barriers to young people from all backgrounds entering the legal profession.



This year's ambitions

- We'll be building on the work we've already done with a view to increasing our activities. Specifically, we'll continue to expand our relationship with Bishop Young Academy and the Ahead Partnership.
- Alongside our usual programme of events, our aim for this year is to be able to offer a week's work experience to a number of students at the school. The aim of the week will be to inspire the students by showing them the many roles available within an employer like us.
- We've signed up to Breaking Down Barriers to Law, a project led by Justine Greening, former Education Secretary. We want to maximise our involvement and look at how the legal sector can do more to proactively engage with those from under-represented backgrounds.

Governance

Our vision

We'll govern Walker Morris in a way that builds complete trust from our stakeholders, mitigates and manages risk, and unites all our people behind one vision of success.

Story so far

Over the last 12 months, we've:

- Made a number of changes to the partnership application process to improve rigour and fairness. It's now more transparent, with more materials for applicants on the process, workshops open to all, and greater Board involvement.
- Got our Risk Register up and running, meaning risks in all areas of the business are being monitored and managed in a more robust way.
- Introduced new Anti-Money Laundering and Sanctions policies.
- Developed a new Client & Matter Intake process, with better data capture and enhanced compliance.
- Expanded the Risk & Compliance team, with 3 new roles.
- Continued to develop our approach to Business Continuity, with an IT-specific plan now in place and a comprehensive Crisis Communications toolkit. We've also trained the Board on cyber response.

This year's ambitions

We'll continue to develop our governance processes in the coming year, with a particular focus on:

- Developing and agreeing a new strategy. We're now in the last year of Ambition 24, and we want our next stage to be even more successful than this one.
- Adopting a new Constitution, to make sure it's fit for purpose.
- Refreshing our supplier management process.
- Improving the route to partnership. We're launching Forge, our 18-month leadership programme which all new and aspiring partners will attend.



ESG Steering Committee

For more information

Please contact our ESG Steering Committee.
We look forward to updating you in 2024.



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