2023

Annual Report
2023

For spending 18,000+ hours supporting us through the year, we thank our amazing 230+ volunteers!

40,000+ Full time employees supported

19 Events held in 2023

700+ Attendees across events

1042 Trees and shrubs planted in 12 forests

1800+ students impacted across 5 public schools

120+ SWR memberships

20 Municipalities

74,927.9 Tonnes Committed (CO₂e)

94,097.1 Tonnes Reduced to Date (CO₂e)
As the saying goes, sometimes we don’t see the forest for the trees. As humans, the small issues, tasks, actions, and priorities of the moment take all of our attention. We focus to be sure we have each detail in hand, all the seeds planted that we will need for the future. But sometimes, keeping our eyes on the future forest we are planting can be a challenge.

Each year, as SWR starts the work to do our yearly reporting and planning to celebrate the year that was, we are afforded a few moments to pull back and look at the beautiful forest that we are helping to grow. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the impact of each action is not isolated to one impact area. The interconnectedness of our world, of social movements, or the changes we see happening all around us is the fertile ground that is needed for a better future.

As a region that is focused on data, innovation, and impact, the numbers are often the thing that is driving us. SWR is no exception. We strongly believe in the importance of measurement, that management and action comes from knowledge. The work that we do in reducing our climate impacts in a variety of ways must be driven by the reality of the data and actions must address these. To that end, we design all our work around data-driven decision making. The data is the thing that helps ensure we are growing in the right direction.

This year, our Year End Report has lots of data points for you. Each story, each action, each and every graph brings more information. And each of these are critically important. At the same time, we encourage you to consider pulling back a little, to see the bigger picture. Look not only at the individual accomplishments, actions, and commitments that have been made in our various programs, and with our vast network. Look also at the ways that we are all together putting down the roots that grow the forest.

While it is the metaphorical trees that hold our daily attention, join us in taking a moment to step back and look at the forest we are all planting and tending together. Think about the current community and future generations that we are growing this future for. Every trunk, branch, and leaf together grows towards a future that is kinder, offers support and comfort, and builds to stronger roots for those yet to come.

“A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they shall never sit.” — Greek Proverb.

Tova Davidson
Executive Director

Barry Colbert Ph.D.
Board Chair

“A Tree Does Not a Forest Make
- Yoruba Proverb
SWR Award Winners

These awards are given to those who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to support a more sustainable community. These recipients have provided outstanding support to SWR, our programs, projects, and people.

LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION

This award recognizes community-based GHG reduction and social transformation efforts.

**CycleWR**

Over the past three years, CycleWR members who also sat on the ClimateActionWR Transportation Sector Committee, built a model to support the prioritization of cycling routes that prioritizes the connection of neighbourhoods, key points of interest and equity deserving areas. The model was shared with committees and transportation planners around the region to advocate for cycling infrastructure that serves areas with the highest needs. Congratulations to CycleWR for their work and continued promotion of cycling!

SUSTAINABLE COMMUTING

This award recognizes an organization that excelled at promoting Sustainable Commuting options.

**Manulife Financial**

In November 2023, Manulife hosted an employee wellness event with TravelWise to increase awareness and uptake of TravelWise’s Corporate transit program. Manulife employees took over 8,000 trips on transit in 2023! Manulife also hosted an internal promotion for a new bike and accessories to engage employees on active commuting and offers supportive policies for remote work that help reduce commuter car trips. Congratulations Manulife for making sustainable transportation an easy choice for employees!

GREATEST GHG REDUCTION

This award recognizes the organization that has reduced the most GHG emissions.

**WCDSB**

While incorporating new health and safety factors such as increased ventilation and filtration to address pandemic issues, WCDSB implemented several initiatives in the past year to reduce their GHG emissions. They retrofitted rooftop and air handling units, radiators, fans, boilers, water heaters and pumps with high efficiency units. They also implemented holiday scheduling for all 250+ portables, upgraded their building automation systems at several schools, and optimized their HVAC scheduling to coordinate more with high and low occupancy times. Congratulations to WCDSB for their proactiveness!
PARTNER OF THE YEAR

This award recognizes an organization that went above and beyond in their support and participation in 2023.

YNCU

A good partner is supportive, and builds a better future together, and in 2023 YNCU was an incredible partner! As members they installed EV chargers, participated in Carbon Cleanse, had an active Green Team, and started to track some additional scope 3 emissions such as mail. YNCU also supported the Microforest program, sponsoring and volunteering at plantings across the community. And if that is not enough, they offer e-waste collection for batteries, purchased renewable energy credits through Bullfrog Power to offset corporate office emissions and brought together other credit unions to do the same. They have done all this while also becoming B-Corp certified. It has been a big year. Congratulations to YNCU! We can’t wait to see what’s next!

GREEN TEAM OF THE YEAR

This award celebrates the green team that fosters and champions a culture of sustainability across their organization.

MTE

For many organizations, the motor that drives sustainability efforts is the green team, and MTE’s is an effective one indeed. They are always eager to learn about new ideas and look closely at reports and data and leverage their own expertise and ours to do more every year. The MTE green team looks for projects that make change now and for years to come. This includes creating a culture of sustainability, engaging their team members in many activities throughout the year, including our Carbon Cleanse! Thank you to MTE for being so green and keen!

ROOTS AND SHOOTS

This award recognizes an organization that has been a long time part of our network, who is growing further into new initiatives and endeavors that expand their sustainability efforts.

Farm Mutual Re

As a long time member of SWR, Farm Mutual Re approached 2023 with renewed commitment for sustainability. They joined the Microforest Program, being the sponsor, host and volunteer team to put a new microforest on their land in Cambridge. As a member of the Impact Network, they have re-engaged, attending almost all of our Impact Network educational events, with an ambitious green team. Thank you to Farm Mutual Re for having such deep roots, and now growing new shoots with our programs in 2023!

COMMUNITY BUILDER

In recognition of an organization whose actions have fostered positive interactions and inclusion within the network.

Home Depot

Home Depot has become an SWR partner in 2023. They supported ClimateActionWR’s electrification event by bringing a wide variety of suppliers of electric industrial landscaping equipment. Their support has also been given to the Microforest program through providing equipment (both donations and rentals) and volunteers. One key project we worked on together was the Anishnabeg Outreach Reconciliation Garden, where they brought volunteers, equipment, trees and even lunch! Thank you to Home Depot for helping us build a better community together!
ClimateActionWR

Acting collectively to build resilience.

ClimateActionWR is a collaboration between local organizations, community members, and municipalities in Waterloo region, focused on climate change mitigation, led by Reep Green Solutions and Sustainable Waterloo Region. It coordinates the activities of our community’s climate action plans with a current greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction target of 80% GHG reduction by 2050.

We launched the TransformWR Progress Dashboard which helps to digitize and modernize our reporting. Now that we have 78 actions in TransformWR and many more stakeholders, the dashboard allows us to be more nimble in sharing key progress indicators, resources and stories of action.

This year:

We launched the TransformWR Progress Dashboard which helps to digitize and modernize our reporting. Now that we have 78 actions in TransformWR and many more stakeholders, the dashboard allows us to be more nimble in sharing key progress indicators, resources and stories of action.
In 2023, ClimateActionWR published our community’s most recent community greenhouse gas re-inventory report. What has been made evident by our community’s emissions from 2019 to 2020?

Without the drastic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic we would not have been likely to achieve our first community greenhouse gas emission target of 6%.

As a community, our implementation plans require an intersectional approach to ensure we are building resilience, equity and prosperity for our low-carbon future.

We have a short window to take action to meet our 2030 target of a 50% emissions reduction (below 2010 levels).

Transformational systems change over incremental change is a necessity.

See the full Our Progress, Our Path GHG Re-inventory report at climateactionwr.ca.

Scan me to view the Climate Action Dashboard!

Or visit https://dashboard.climateactionwr.ca/
Stepping up to grow Microforests

Our community really showed up in 2023 to support our Microforest Program! From Woolwich to Wilmot, new microforests were planted not only with new types of trees and shrubs, but also serving new purposes.

With 69.6% of respondents interested in engaging with Microforests, this growth is likely to continue!

12 Sites
1042 Trees Planted
200+ Volunteers

New in 2023

1st flooding and erosion prevention planting of 200 trees in one location
1st time planting a food forest
1st time planting with students
1st time planting a memory garden
We piloted the incorporation of children on school planting days, bringing out educator Nature Nate to teach the kids about why trees are important while we had them help plant, mulch and water their new microforest.

**5 Schools**

We had some wonderful groups of corporate and student volunteers out to plant on the land of institutions and businesses, including the David Johnston R+T Park, Farm Mutual Re, and a Waterloo condominium corporation.

**3 Businesses**

We partnered with Bereaved Families of Ontario - Midwestern Region (BFO) and the City of Kitchener to create an event that allowed community members to plant a tree in memory of loved ones. This was followed by a ceremony run by BFO.

**Voisin Park Planting**

We planted microforests at:

Scan me to view our Microforest map!

See a collection of where and when we planted all of our microforests.
Eminidowang Kitigaan | Spirit Garden for Everyone

On the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, we planted a food forest at Anishnabeg Outreach’s Eminidowang Kitigaan (Spirit Garden for Everyone). Different from our typical microforest, we planted fruit trees and shrubs that will provide apples, pears, cherries, apricots and plums to the community.

Thanks to those that helped make all our 2023 forests a success

Interested in joining the fun? The goal is to plant 15 more forests across the region in 2024. We always welcome new partnerships, sponsors, land donations, and volunteers.

Please contact microforests@sustainablewr.ca
evolv1

evolv1 is a green office building located in the David Johnston Research + Technology park in Waterloo, Ontario. The concept of evolv1 was inspired by Sustainable Waterloo Region and is owned and developed by the Cora Group. evolv1 is Canada’s first net-positive energy commercial multi-tenant office building. The building prioritizes sustainability and clean energy production in its building design and operation. evolv1 is meant to motivate, inspire and educate the public and sustainable workplace design.

Solar generation was down a fair amount due to technical issues on an inverter, atmospheric soiling caused by wildfire smoke, particularly during June and July of 2023, on top of lower irradiance levels in July 2023.

Culture of Sustainability

This program started as a research project, in partnership with VERiS, to gather data about engendering a culture of sustainability within office buildings. It was designed for and by the evolv1 community to encourage sustainable habits through the building’s design and social sustainability.

10+ Building tours
4 Informational sessions
200+ Students impacted
Impact Network

SWR’s Impact Network (IN) supports local organizations across Waterloo Region, Oxford, Perth, and Wellington, to integrate sustainability into the core of their operations. With a large varied membership base, each approach is tailored to specific needs. Through our Milestone process, we are able to incorporate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our framework. This allows members to align their goals with the SDGs and attain a just and sustainable, low-carbon future. We work to support members in understanding their impacts, and to set voluntary targets related to greenhouse gas emissions, waste and water impacts, and increasing waste diversion.

8 Events 80+ Members 500+ Attendees

66.7%* 79.2%* 89.5%* Of respondents implemented GHG reduction initiatives Of respondents implemented employee & community engagement initiatives Of respondents are working towards a GHG reduction target

* of Impact Network survey respondents

12 organizations leading the charge

In the Impact Network, there is a small but mighty group that are ahead of the game in their organizations’ journey to operational sustainability. We call them the Masters Level members.

These 12 organizations all meet at least one eligibility criteria, ranging from being a founding partner of SWR, having set and met a gold target, re-upped a target, and more. We look to this group to see what the next step will be in supporting organizational sustainability, and how to help other members as effectively as possible! They are also a sounding board for program innovations. Thank you so much to our amazing Masters Level members.
New Members

We are thrilled to share that Brock Solutions, Little Mushroom Catering, Oxford County, Sustainable, The Wooden Boat, Vive Development and Woodstock Hospital joined the Impact Network this year! These diverse members are already taking impactful strides, and we can’t wait to see what they’ll achieve next.

We had a mix of online, offline and hybrid events in 2023. Our Peer-to-Peer Happy Hour events were so valuable with one member saying, “This is the best event I’ve ever attended”.
SDG Reporting & B Corp Certified Members

The Sustainable Development Goals Action Manager is a tool that allows organizations to internally assess their operations against the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through 17 modules.

This brings the B Lab B Impact Assessment, the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact and the Sustainable Development Goals all together into one assessment tool. There are 17 interconnected goals, which are a blueprint for bettering people and the planet by 2030.

The core modules for the Impact Network are SDG 6, 7, 11, 12 & 13 but members are welcomed and encouraged to complete the other 12 modules to gain a better understanding of their organizations’ impacts.

Businesses can become B Corp certified if they meet high standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency on factors from employee benefits and charitable giving to supply chain practices and input materials.

Member Milestones

**MILESTONE 1**
Onboarding

**MILESTONE 2**
Capacity Building

**MILESTONE 3**
Reporting
These members are working to compare and improve their organizations against the SDGs.
Pledging Members

AS OF DECEMBER 31ST, 2023

Member Progress

These pages show the progress of our Pledging Members.

Key terms to know are:

**ABSOLUTE EMISSIONS**
Total GHG emissions produced by the organization.

**INTENSITY EMISSIONS**
GHG emissions divided by a particular growth indicator.

**SCOPE 3 REPORTING**
Indirect sources of GHG emissions captured in their target.

**WATER FOCUS AREAS**
Areas where members have reduced their water usage.

**GHG & WATER TARGETS**
Members trying to reduce their emissions below the target line.

**WASTE DIVERSION TARGET**
Members trying to reduce their waste to the landfill above the target line.

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**GHG reduction target**

**100% by 2029 (absolute)**

- **Target:** 200
- **Progress:** 150
- **Legend:** Base Year, Progress, Target
- **Absolute reduction to date:** 74 TONNES CO₂e

**Waste diversion target**

**90% by 2023**

- **Target:** 100
- **Progress:** 86
- **Legend:** Base Year, Progress, Target
- **Current diversion:** 78%

**Water reduction target**

**30% by 2025 (absolute)**

- **Target:** 800
- **Progress:** 600
- **Legend:** Base Year, Progress, Target
- **Absolute reduction to date:** 164.3 m³
TWO TARGETS

**LAURIER**

**GHG reduction target**

- **25% by 2028** (absolute)
- **38% of goal reached**

- **GHG sources (scope 3)**
  - Waste, Water, Business
  - Travel

- **GHG emissions** (Tonnes CO₂e)
  - Absolute reduction to date: 854 TONNES CO₂e

**Waste diversion target**

- **60% by 2022**
- **32% of goal reached**

- **Waste diversion (%)**
  - Current diversion: 19%

**UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO**

**GHG reduction target**

- **35% by 2029** (absolute)
- **28% of goal reached**

- **GHG sources (scope 3)**
  - N/A

- **GHG emissions** (Tonnes CO₂e)
  - Absolute reduction to date: 3351 TONNES CO₂e

**Waste diversion target**

- **60% by 2026**
- **47% of goal reached**

- **Waste diversion (%)**
  - Current diversion: 28%
ONE TARGET

GHG reduction target 8% by 2026 (absolute)
GHG sources (scope 3) Waste

GHG reduction target 22% by 2021 (intensity)
GHG sources (scope 3) Business Travel

GHG reduction target 20% by 2025 (intensity)
GHG sources (scope 3) N/A

GHG reduction target 40% by 2026 (intensity)
GHG sources (scope 3) N/A

GHG reduction target 80% by 2018 (intensity)
GHG sources (scope 3) N/A

Legend for Charts: ■ Base Year ■ Progress ■ Target

100% of goal reached
67% of goal reached
0% of goal reached
0% of goal reached
n/a
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Legend for Charts:  ■ Base Year  ■ Progress  ■ Target

**GHG reduction target**

**GHG sources (scope 3)**

**Water**

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**Bronze**

GHG reduction target

20% by 2024 (intensity)

- **Target:** 0%

- **Progress:** 50% of goal reached

- **Base Year:** 18

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**Silver**

GHG reduction target

40% by 2024 (intensity)

- **Target:** 0%

- **Progress:** 51% of goal reached

- **Base Year:** 18

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**Bronze**

GHG reduction target

20% by 2029 (intensity)

- **Target:** 0%

- **Progress:** 0% of goal reached

- **Base Year:** 18
New services added to make transformation easier

PROVIDING ENHANCED SERVICES

We have augmented our service offerings to our members through; customized scope 3 emissions tracking, seamless and credible automated data uploads, member offerings to support network collaboration and more.

Ready for the next step in your journey?
Contact us about custom ways we can help you!

AUTOMATING DATA UPLOADS

Through our Impact Tool, it is now possible to automate data collection for a seamless, credible and time-saving finish. Using the connect function, members can have their energy, water and other data uploaded directly from their service provider’s account.

Learn more by reaching out to us at impactnetwork@sustainablewr.ca

Green Economy Canada

The Impact Network is one of seven Green Economy Hubs across Canada supporting a growing network of businesses and organizations to set and achieve sustainability targets. Together, we’re demonstrating a more sustainable economy is possible.
Member Stories

Arcadian Projects and Bavarian Window Works recently collaborated on a solar project to reduce Bavarian’s operational costs and carbon footprint. Bavarian’s net metering system generates enough power to offset its annual consumption. The system is projected to provide lifetime carbon savings of 179.3 tonnes of CO₂e and lifetime energy savings of 1,195,291 kilowatt hours kWh.

At AET’s head office, all heating and cooling have been transitioned off natural gas with the installation of a cold climate heat pump. This transition supports their commitment to SDG 7, and many other climate related initiatives.

In 2023, the City of Waterloo launched its 2023-2026 Strategic Plan which places a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability and climate action. The City’s Corporate Climate Action Plan also outlines 61 different actions to achieve the GHG emission reduction goal of 50% by 2030. The City of Waterloo has worked hard to achieve sustainability in operations, programs and services.
Conrad Grebel University College has set a 35% greenhouse gas reduction target by 2030, supported by the Impact Network. This is Grebel’s first target as a Pledging Partner, matching the University of Waterloo’s GHG reduction goal.

Farm Mutual Re’s office building is LEED® Gold Certified. In 2023, all 236 lbs of produce grown in their onsite garden was donated to the Cambridge Food Bank, and in May, volunteers planted a microforest. Participating in Waterloo Region’s Adopt-a-Road program, volunteers clean up a section of Pinebush Road every spring and fall.

MTE Consultants implemented recycling streams into their waste diversion.
- 3 full boxes of old or broken PPE was recycled
- 120 writing instruments were returned, and e-waste is properly recycled
- They also have an organics collection
- No disposable cups are available onsite

Studio Locale’s commitment to sustainability is appropriately captured with their recent B Corp certification status. Choosing to increase their reduction pledge to 60% of their GHG emissions further reinforces their dedication to social and environmental responsibility as an organization and in the delivery of their services.

Since 2021, KEI has achieved a 25% increase in waste diversion through reuse and recycling. KEI outsources organic waste, achieved their green goals by turning organic waste into power and shifted to LED lights. City water usage reduced by 66% since 2015 and KEI continues to achieve water reduction targets.

The Township of Woolwich installed 2 EV charging stations in the village of St. Jacob’s in 2023 and is working on a Pathway to Net Zero Feasibility Study for five municipal buildings, including two arenas, a fire station, community center, and their administration building!

Woodstock General Hospital and Stryker are reducing medical waste. The hospital saved about $87,000, utilizing 1,390 reprocessed devices. More than 500 lbs of waste has been diverted!

YNCU is now B Corp certified! They became an e-waste recycling center for batteries, have installed EV chargers and purchased enough REC through Bullfrog Power to offset their corporate office emissions. They have also brought together other credit unions to get lower-tiered pricing. In 2023, YNCU planted 2025 trees through their different partnerships.

WRCF has moved to the SDG Idea Factory, which is a shared space with a commitment to SDG 17 - Partnership for Goals. The SDG Idea Factory is an SWR partner that supports social and environmental innovators and equity-deserving entrepreneurs.
Carbon Cleanse 2023

Starting in 2023, our annual Carbon Cleanse challenge has moved to October! Carbon Cleanse is an annual competition that encourages sustainable lifestyle habits such as choosing reusable items over disposable ones and active transportation.

For the first time in Carbon Cleanse history, we had prizes to give away thanks to our amazing sponsors: Bruce Power, Downtown Kitchener BIA, Uptown Waterloo and Gifted.

With the time change, we saw more participation and increased engagement! It was heartwarming to see many employees have fun with the tasks, involving their loved ones in some of the challenges and interacting with us on social media.
Carbon Cleanse Winners

1st 10,650 pts

Energy Week
42 Uncooked meals
20+ Lowered thermostats
10+ Sustainability-related documentaries watched

Transportation Week
150,000 Steps counted

Water Week
58 Meatless meals
43 Attempts at shortest shower time
30 Completed water trivia

2nd 7725 pts

2nd 7725 pts

3rd 7525 pts

3rd 7525 pts
What is TravelWise

Making sustainable transportation the easy choice

TravelWise is an internationally recognized workplace program available to employers across Waterloo Region. TravelWise aims to encourage employees to take transit, bike, walk and carpool to work instead of driving alone.

As a TravelWise member, your employees gain access to a dedicated staff carpool network, GRT’s Corporate Transit programs, reimbursement for emergency rides home, and promotions.

Does your workplace have a parking issue? Are you looking for programs to support your corporate sustainability initiatives or climate strategy?

Contact TravelWise today!
TravelWise@regionofwaterloo.ca

New and Returning TravelWise Members for 2023

TravelWise activities

In 2023, TravelWise rewarded members’ employees with more than $10,000 in promotions through gift cards, GRT Stored Value cards, smart appliances, bike lights and bikes as they chose to commute sustainably in all seasons.

In response to members’ enthusiasm, Bike Month was extended to be Bike Season, running in June and July. Employees of TravelWise workplaces were encouraged to log their trips on GoTravelWise.ca for a chance to win an awesome yellow GRT bike! More than 2,500 trips were logged for a chance to win one of two bikes and the runner-up prize of bike lights, pannier bags and a bell.

October and November 2023 were our Transit Showcase months! More than 200 employees participated by ordering a Corporate Fare card during those months. Fifteen prizes were given out, including $50 EasyGO Stored Value prizes, and $100 EasyGO Stored Value prizes.
TravelWise successfully launched two major initiatives:

The new GRT Corporate Stored Value product, which is exclusive to TravelWise members

In response to feedback from program users and more remote work options, we introduced a new GRT fare product exclusive to TravelWise members – Corporate Stored Value! Like the Corporate Monthly Pass (15% off a monthly pass), Corporate Stored Value saves members 15% on each transit trip. Now members who occasionally commute to work by transit can enjoy similar savings and benefits from the TravelWise membership.

Exclusive TravelWise member promotions with the Region’s e-bike / e-scooter share program with Neuron Mobility

In 2023, TravelWise members were eligible for a free introductory ride, and Neuron bikes and scooters were showcased at events with TravelWise members. Two employers worked with TravelWise to install e-scooter racks for their employees!

The Region will partner with Neuron Mobility for a second year, with shared e-scooters and e-bikes coming back in April and a plan to expand the service area and station locations.

The future of TravelWise is bright!

Grand River Transit is now bringing the TravelWise program under its family of services.

The work of SWR has made the TravelWise program an important component of our community climate actions in the TransformWR strategy.

The Region and GRT are thankful to the entire SWR team for all the hard work, investment of time and resources, expertise, and commitment shown to employee commuting, climate action, and creating a low carbon future for our community.

The Region of Waterloo and Sustainable Waterloo Region have been working together in partnership through a series of contracts to deliver the TravelWise program for the entire life of the program - about 12 years now.

SWR’s work to recruit, support, and engage TravelWise members has resulted in a strong program that today serves more than 40 organizations across Waterloo Region.
Act now.

Join us to build a climate-resilient organization and community.

Whether you want to:

• Save on operating costs
• Create a credible green brand
• Reduce risk exposure
• Attract and retain talent
• Increase innovation

or learn how you can get involved in building a better community, we are here to help.

www.sustainablewr.ca
519-603-2223
info@sustainablewr.ca

Environmental Impact Statement
150 copies of the 2023 Report were printed using 13kg of 100% post-consumer recycled paper. It was also distributed digitally to reduce printed copies. By using more sustainable paper we saved: 24kg of GHG emissions | 1000 litres of water | 277 kilowatt hours

Environmental impact estimates were made using the Environmental Paper Network Paper Calculator Version 3.2