

Annual Impact Report 2023

Our Sustainability Highlights, 2023

- Developed a Sustainability Action Plan
- Established a Sustainability Governance Team
- Introduced sustainability training for all employees and our key resource suppliers
- EcoVadis Silver Medal winners
- SBTi commitment, listed as a Company Taking Action as part of the Science Based Targets initiative
- Reduction in carbon emissions from 2021/2022 baseline
- Donations to charity, voted for by our employees
- Began communicating our sustainability commitments, internally and externally
- Began sustainability procurement assessments on our product and service suppliers

Review

Employee-Owned companies have a rich tradition in prioritising sustainability efforts, and here at Plus-Project we are striving to continue these traditions. We are extremely proud of our efforts to date having met some key sustainability aims in 2023 under the guidance of Michael Wall, our first Sustainability Sponsor and Plus-Project Chair. These include, in no particular order, the appointment of our first dedicated Sustainability Manager, development of Sustainability training for all employees and resource suppliers, creation of a Sustainability Governance Team, and being awarded a silver EcoVadis medal.

I am excited to be starting the role as Plus-Project's Sustainability Sponsor and very much looking forward to supporting our sustainability efforts in 2024. It will be another busy year as we aim to develop a Code of Conduct and a Supplier Code of Conduct, enhance our sustainable procurement processes, and publish our first Sustainability newsletter which will provide a dedicated forum for employees to share their stories and ideas.



Phil Rowe, Executive Director of Statistics and Sustainability Sponsor from January 2024



Who we are

Plus-Project, the first employee-owned CRO (Clinical Research Organisation), aims to redefine fairness in the Biostatistics sector. By returning profits to employees, Plus-Project Ltd attracts and retains the best talent available, providing clients with stable, happy people and deliver excellent quality services.

Formed in April 2014 by Michael Wall (Chair), Alison Wall (Managing Director) and Phil Rowe (Executive Director of Statistics) Plus-Project Ltd became an Employee-Ownership Trust (EOT) on 18 December 2019. With offices across the UK and Europe. Plus-Project Ltd is committed to pursuing sustainability where the environment, society, and business can thrive.

Employee Ownership Trust



- Most shares are now owned equitably by all employees via an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT), ensuring fair treatment and reward of employees in everything we do.
- Every quarter, the Plus-Project Chair on behalf of the Plus-Project Board reports into the Plus-Project EOT Trustees, consisting of 2 Founder Trustees, 2 elected Employee Trustees, and an Independent Trustee. The Chair shares the reasoning behind significant company decisions, so the Trustees can establish fair consideration of the employees and the company.
- Plus-Project does not return profits to external shareholders such as banks, venture capitalists, or investors, with company profits equitably and fairly shared across our employees.
- EOT rewards are unique, with qualifying employees receiving summer and Christmas and exceptional bonuses. Historically, each median paid employee has received an average of 18% in annual bonuses, the first £3,600 of which is free of income tax for UK employees of companies with employee ownership status.
- Plus-Project Ltd attracts and retains talented staff and invests in their training and development. Our exceptionally low attrition rate allows us to provide stable and quality teams. This drives our success and is demonstrated through consistently outstanding client metrics and repeat business.
- See our [Careers Page](#) to learn more about how we support and recognise our employees.





Our work

Providing highly experienced stable teams to our customers we support the progress of drugs trials, delivering expertise across biostatistics. With UK offices in Knutsford, Leeds, Edinburgh, and a subsidiary in Poland, we provide talented professional resource, including through our partnerships in Armenia and Ukraine.

Our values

- Excellence in all that we do
- Sustainability across our business
- Employee well-being
- Sharing opportunities
- Valuing our supply chain partners
- Fair pricing to clients

We are in this together; Our team, clients, and community.

Our assessments and certification



Positive Planet – we work with Positive Planet to gather data, calculate, and report our carbon emissions and annual Carbon Reduction Plan. In 2023, we reduced our carbon emissions and turned to renewable energy suppliers for our electricity, removing our scope 2 emissions.



SBTi (Science Based Target Initiatives) – as an SME (Small & Medium Enterprise) we have committed to an industry recognised standard target reduction Of 1.5° by 2030 and we are listed as “A Company Taking Action” on the SBTi website.



EcoVadis -

- Awarded a Silver Medal,
- Scored in the 83rd percentile of all businesses assessed by EcoVadis
- Scored 63/100 for the Computing sector



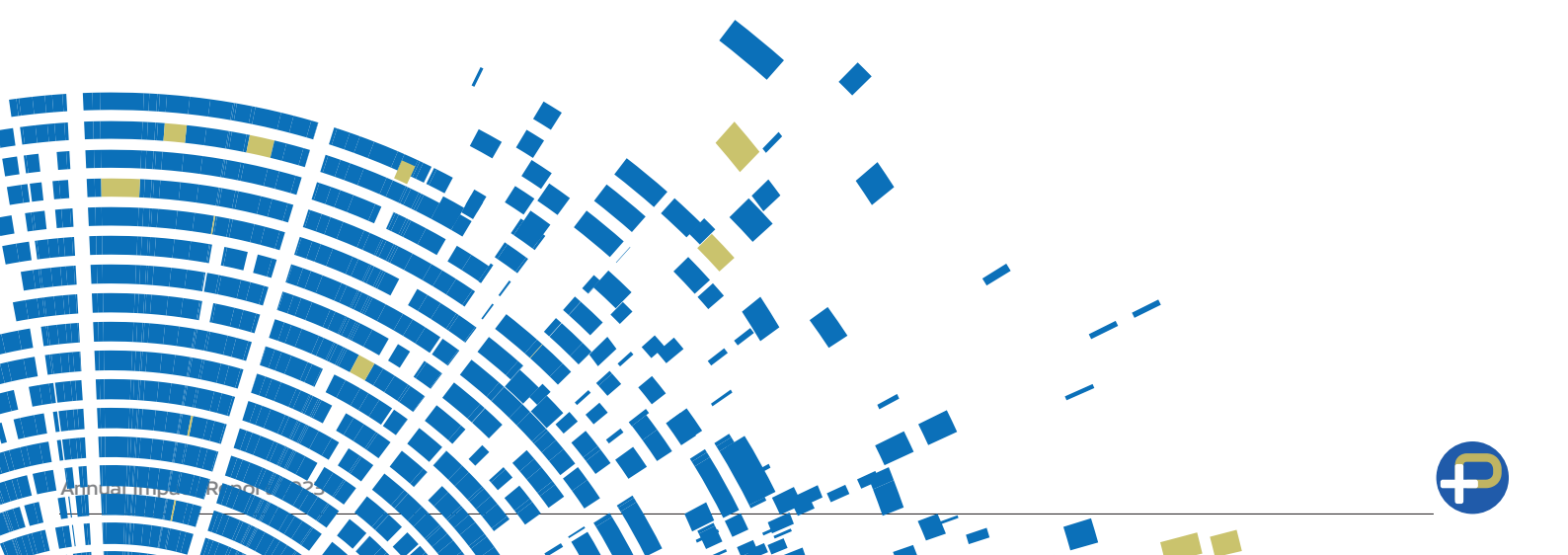
Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) - our information for 2022/2023 was submitted to CDP in July 2023 and our score is due to be announced in early 2024.

KPIs and commitments

We have developed a Sustainability Action Plan, detailing policies, actions, measurements, and reporting requirements that we need to adjust or implement. We are making considerable progress ensuring the changes adhere to our review processes and reflect our company perspective, as well as engaging employees.

Sustainability Action Plan

	General	Environment	Labor & Human Rights	Ethics	Procurement	Totals	%s
To be started	0	6	2	8	0	16	14.55
On hold	0	1	0	0	1	2	1.82
In Progress	2	13	21	5	5	46	41.82
Awaiting decision	2	1	17	8	6	34	30.91
Not viable	1	2	3	1	1	8	7.27
Completed	0	1	0	0	3	4	3.64
Total	5	24	43	22	16	110	100.00



Our impact

Environment

As a service SME (Small and Medium-sized enterprise), rather than a manufacturing company, Scope 3 emissions, in particular business travel and commuting, are a priority. We do not own any property or vehicles, nor do we manufacture products. Therefore, our carbon emissions are confined to scope 3 emissions and include those generated in our rented offices and our supply chain.

Since 2022 we have been collaborating with Positive Planet to calculate and offset our emissions. We produced a Carbon Neutral Action Plan, taking us to 2035, and are making progress on this. We have committed to offset our emissions by purchasing UN approved Carbon Offset products. These are the projects that we supported in 2023 through purchases made on our behalf by our partnership with Positive Planet.



RIMA Magnesium Production Gas Conversion Project in Brazil replaced sulphur hexafluoride with sulphur dioxide reducing GHGs (greenhouse gases). However, it is improvements in the technology for the protection of workers and preservation of the quality of metal that makes it a more environmentally friendly option.

Biomass-based Renewable Energy Generation in Haryana, India uses rice husks to generate biomass which meets the total steam and partial electricity demand required for the processing at the plant. It is estimated to reduce emissions by 179,010 tCO₂e.





The Mexican FoodBanking Network diverts food and unsold goods from landfills and incinerators, avoiding GHG (greenhouse gases) emissions and addressing food insecurity.

Changing how we travel

We operate a hybrid and home-based working model and generate carbon emissions through business travel to conferences and training events. These provide learning, team development, and networking opportunities for our employees so whilst we will do our best to reduce our non-essential travel, encourage the use of public transport where feasible, and encourage low-fossil fuel options, we recognise that we will generate carbon emissions in our travels.

We offer employees the option to join our Electric Vehicle Leasing Scheme with Octopus Energy. The environmental impact of employees who signed up to the scheme at the end of 2023 is shown below.

Trees Planted / Carbon Savings

		
		CO ² (t)
So far	4,313	8.6
Forecasted	11,159	22.3

octopusenergy



Electronic waste management

WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) reduction is a priority for service businesses in our sector and must be dealt with in a sustainable manner. We are working with a local provider to dispose responsibly of our data and electronic equipment that has reached the end of its life.

Employee engagement

In 2023 we established a Sustainability Governance Team led by our newly appointed Sustainability Manager, with two employee representatives who complete a 2-year membership. Rotation allows other employees to participate in our sustainability efforts.

Sustainable procurement of IT products

Through our procurement process we began purchasing new IT equipment that is TCO certified.

Training and policies

- 100% employees completed our introductory training on sustainability
- 3 new employees attended Sustainability Onboarding Training

Policies

- 100% of employees read and committed to our Sustainability Policy
- 100% of employees read and committed to our Sustainability Procurement Policy

Social

This details our impact on our stakeholders: our employees, clients, and the community. Our actions have an impact, and we believe that this demonstrates how they are connected.

OUR STAKEHOLDERS



Our employees

Plus-Project Ltd is an equal opportunities employer, recruiting, promoting, and providing access to training and development opportunities based on individual development needs, skills, and experience, and talent. Plus-Project does not discriminate.



Our commitment to our employees is reflected in our low attrition rate and range of benefits offered to all employees.

Employee info

- Plus-Project is 52.5% female
- Plus-Project Leadership is 62.5% female
- Full time employees = 75% Part time employees = 25%
- Hybrid = 51% Remote (WFH) = 49%
- Employee retention is 93.4%
- Sickness rate 0.7%
- Training is 221 days
- Parental leave - 24.5 days (total)

Bonuses

- £3600 paid to all employees in July 2023 (pro rata for employees with <12 months service)
- 12% of salary paid to all employees in December 2023 (pro rata for employees with <12 months service)
- Announcement of a company exceptional performance bonus calculated based on length of service

Benefits

- Pension
- Life insurance
- Private health cover
- Bonuses (as above)
- Training allowance
- Internet allowance
- Access to the mental health support lines
- Flexible working patterns with fully remote, or hybrid options at our offices in Knutsford, Leeds, Edinburgh, and Warsaw.
- Access to free mortgage advice

Employees are also offered the following subsidised schemes:

- EV scheme
- Nursery places
- Cycle to work scheme
- Gym membership



Our suppliers

Our suppliers are vetted in line with our sustainable procurement process, identified by an annual spend or where their function is determined to be key to our business. Our Sustainable Procurement Policy is being reviewed to incorporate checklists and audits for our suppliers, to improve our understanding of carbon emissions and better reflect sustainability commitments in our supply chain. A Supplier Code of Conduct is also planned for 2024.

Our clients

We are working closely with clients on mutually agreed sustainability priorities.

Our communities

We cannot operate in isolation and strive to form better connections with our local communities both through both direct and indirect support for local initiatives and future talent. In 2023 our employees voted to select five charities / community with local connections to our offices / employee base. Each charity / community group received £2500 (£12,500 in total).



Love Oliver, UK



Idylla Fundacja, Poland



Weston Park, UK



Kidscan, UK



The Hope Hub, UK

Nurseries

Through our employee benefits scheme for employees, we have introduced the government nursery place scheme. Employees save on their tax and NI contributions, and the nurseries benefit as they receive a contribution from us, covered by the NI contributions we save. This can be used for equipment, training, redecoration, or anything else they need - everybody wins!



Principal Programmer Jess Anderson and Senior Statistician Sam Hadlington at the PSI Careers Fair

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering or Maths) engagement

As part of our commitment to engaging future talent, we attended the PSI Careers Fair in Sheffield, engaging university and high school students about careers in biostatistics, highlighting learning and career pathways.

Several members of the Plus-Project Team volunteer with PSI Careers panels, assisting in identifying ways to improve engagement of young people in future careers as biostatisticians or statistical programmers.

D&I (Diversity & Inclusion)

In December 2023 we began researching how best to review and implement a D&I strategy for our business and supply chain. This is a priority area for 2024 to determine our training, operational and supply chain needs.



Governance

- Cyber Essentials Certified
- We sourced a GDPR consultancy and appointed a Data Protection Officer
- SAS Daniels provide legal advice regarding our HR & Health & Safety policies
- Greenlight Computing, ISO 27001 and ISO 9001 certified, provide IT Strategy and Outsourcing
- Consultancy, IT Infrastructure and Product Supply, Cloud Solutions, and Cyber Security
- Every quarter, the Chair on behalf of the Plus-Project Board reports into the Plus-Project EOT Trustees.

Ethics

- Zero confirmed corruption and bribery breaches
- Zero Whistleblower reported incidents
- 100% of employees trained on IT security
- In 2023 we moved to a pension provider that integrates ESG factors into investment analysis and decision-making process.

Looking forward to 2024



We are proud of the progress that we made in 2023 but recognise that there is more that we can achieve in 2024/2025. We are excited about the future, in addition to developing our reporting and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).



Environment

- Implement a Business Travel Policy
- Sign a contract to enable us to responsibly recycle and dispose of WEEE
- Engage our landlords to begin the process of obtaining medium quality data in our carbon emission calculations
- Incorporate sustainability into the planning of our 10-year anniversary celebrations, reducing our environmental impact
- Developing a Materiality Assessment.



Social

- Develop strategies for in person and remote community and STEM engagement through volunteering, sponsorship, and professional support
- Investigate how we can improve our approach to D&I to attract more diverse talent in our own business and supply chain
- Revamp our career management and training guidance
- Further employee engagement via a new sustainability newsletter.



Governance

- Revamp our Sustainable Procurement Policy developing checklists for audits and gathering information from suppliers and landlords
- Build on our procurement relationships, engaging in ESG conversations
- Implement a Supplier Code of Conduct
- Ensure optimal data protection with the assistance of our newly appointed GDPR consultants
- Update our Master Service Agreements to include commitments to ESG
- Develop a company risk register.