

2020-2022



SUSTAINABLE
WEDDING ALLIANCE

IMPACT REPORT



SUSTAINABLE
WEDDING ALLIANCE

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Sustainable Wedding Alliance

The Sustainable Wedding Alliance guides wedding businesses through their sustainable journey with the help of bespoke education, support and accreditation. The Sustainable Wedding Alliance is a purpose-driven network, and gives access to a membership that connects wedding businesses with like minded, ethical businesses, to help them get started with making their business more sustainable.

All members of the Sustainable Wedding Alliance make the shared commitment to work together to reduce the impact the wedding industry has on the planet.

The Sustainable Wedding Alliance is focused on developing tools to help companies make their business greener, educate their clients on what sustainability means for them, and promote sustainable businesses far and wide, and is now welcoming partners who want to become part of the community leading the change towards a more sustainable wedding industry.

Our 'mission'

"is to drive change to create a more sustainable wedding industry, raise awareness and tackle climate change and attitudes, by proactively encouraging businesses to develop future thinking strategies and make responsible decisions. We believe that we are trustees of this planet and it's our duty to not only make sure it survives, but it thrives. We respect the planet in our care and all that lives on it."

Our 'values'

As a purpose driven business, our values are such an important part of who we are and what we do.

- » We act with integrity at all times
- » We are open and honest in our communication
- » We respect our planet and all that live on it
- » We promote collaboration over competition
- » We embrace change, new ideas and approaches
- » We are continuously learning and improving
- » We empower our communities, giving them the confidence and support they need to thrive.



5.0

Our Journey

SWA was incorporated in
December 2020 after a year
in development.

Website launched on
1 March 2021

First sustainable wedding
survey (couples and
businesses) April 2021

First Sustainable Wedding Summit
(virtual) on 6 May 2021

Launch of membership
17 May 2021, with first member
joining on the same day

First accredited member in
October 2021

In person Conscious Connection
events in Oct/Nov 2021 – Wales,
Kent, Oxfordshire

Launched scholarship
on 1 November 2021

17 members by end of 2021 (inc. 1
accredited member)

Launched first couple education
campaign No more unnecessaries
March 2022

Second Sustainable Wedding
Summit – in person and virtual
25 & 26 April 2022

Second sustainable wedding
survey (couples and businesses)
April 2022

Conscious Connections
events Autumn/Winter 22/23 –
Loughborough, Kent,
Berkshire, Devon, Hereford

Launched Sustainable
Wedding Awards
October 2022

Finalists announced
December 2022

35 members at the
end of 2022 (inc. 5
accredited members and
6 cancelled members)

How sustainable is the wedding industry right now?

Is a question that we get asked a lot! And unfortunately there hasn't been an easy answer. So in April 2021 we launched our wedding sustainability surveys – one for couples and one for businesses. We then repeat the survey annually, with a few added questions, to find out how the industry is changing and what we need to do to support it.

2021

How important is sustainability when planning your wedding?

95% of couples told us that sustainability was a factor when planning their wedding.

With **66%** saying it was important or very important to them!

Do you think you've become more environmentally conscious in the last 12 months?

71% said they had become more environmentally conscious.

Are you more likely to book a supplier with sustainable credentials?

62% of couples told us that they were more likely to book a supplier if they had sustainable credentials, with an additional **24%** saying maybe!

2022

How important is sustainability when planning your wedding?

98% of couples told us that sustainability was a factor when planning their wedding.

With **78%** saying it was important or very important to them!

Do you think you've become more environmentally conscious in the last 12 months?

89% said they had become more environmentally conscious.

Are you more likely to book a supplier with sustainable credentials?

69% of couples told us that they were more likely to book a supplier if they had sustainable credentials, with an additional **18%** saying maybe!

The business survey included 31 questions about sustainability in general, but also more specifically about the seven sustainable themes – energy, carbon, transport, waste, water, supply chain and team/community to find out what they are doing.

The first question we asked business is how important sustainability was and staggeringly a huge 97% of businesses said that it was important or very important to them! With the remaining 3% saying it was a consideration and they were just starting to prioritise it.

But so many business, although it's important just don't know what to do to get started with sustainability.

18% of businesses said that they'd like a sustainable business accreditation, so as both couples and businesses asked for one, we developed it – the Sustainable Wedding Alliance Accreditation.

What terms do you associated with sustainability in your business?

fairtrade
zero waste
green
recycled
ethical
carbon neutral
carbon waste
eco
local

How can business encourage couples to make sustainable choices when planning their wedding?

In both surveys, we asked if there was anything that we could provide to help make sustainable weddings a reality more achievable. So, in response in 2023 we will be developing:

- » A wedding carbon footprint calculator
- » The ultimate guide to sustainable wedding planning for conscious couples
- » A sustainable wedding checklist and statistics with easy to share infographics

We hope that by creating easy to use tools and resources for wedding businesses, we can help to drive behaviour change in couples.

Wedding Industry Worth

The average carbon footprint of a wedding in the UK is 14,500 kgCO₂eq. The reason its so high is that the average wedding brings together a large number of people, usually from different areas of the country. 14.5 tons is the average provided by Less Stuff More Meaning's Wedding Carbon Footprint Calculator.

There is an estimated £14.7bn direct spend on weddings every year:

£9.4bn
spend on the day
itself

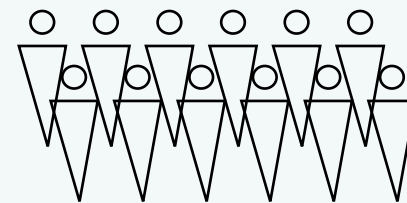
£3.2bn
spend on retail

£2.1bn
travel, tourism
and pre-wedding
events

Wedding Industry Workers

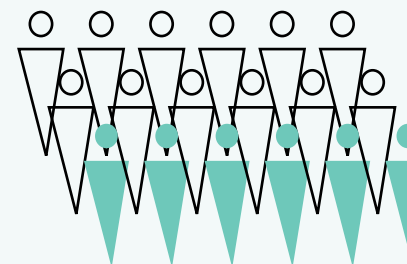
Approximately **400,000** workers are involved in weddings:

250,000 people depend on work related to delivering a wedding day itself



150,000 more work in support functions.

For every couple who attends a wedding as guest, depending upon the size of the wedding between 1 and 4 people are involved in working to deliver the day itself, earning less than £25,000 per year on average.



Number of Wedding Businesses

Most businesses in the wedding sector do not have a defined SIC code when filing their annual Confirmation Statement with Companies House (and therefore tick a box 'other'). It is therefore impossible to ascertain how many wedding related businesses exist. A Taskforce objective is to rectify this omission.

Wedding Carbon Footprint

In 2022 there were an estimated 330,000 weddings, so the potential industry footprint (for the wedding day alone) would be

4,785,000 tons!

If offset by planting trees that would take

217,500,000 trees



(according to Small99 carbon syncing calculator).

It's our mission to drive change and create a sustainable wedding industry, so it's really important that we practice what we preach!

Carbon neutral

2021

3.61 tons CO2e (measured using Normative)

2022

4.8 tons CO2e

In 2020 we made a commitment to be carbon neutral by the end 2021, and we were delighted to achieve it through carbon reduction strategies and offsetting unavoidable emissions.

In 2022 we moved to measuring our footprint using Ecologi Zero. We partner with Ecologi to offset unavoidable emissions and have offset 7.51 tons CO2e up to end December 2022. We have invested in tree planting and carbon reduction projects including renewables, carbon capture technology, wetland restoration and and forestry.

We are on track to become a net zero business by 2023.

As 2022 was our first operational year for membership and accreditation, we expected our emissions to be higher, despite putting place many carbon reduction strategies. 2022 will be our base line year moving forward. We plan to continue to use Ecologi Zero as our measurement tool to ensure consistency of measurements.

In 2020 we made a commitment to be carbon neutral by the end 2021. We are delighted that we achieve this in 2021, and are on track to become net zero by 2030. In 2021 we measured our carbon footprint as 3.61 tonnes CO2e (Scope 1, 2 and 3). The carbon that we have been unable to remove was then offset through our chosen partners, Ecologi.

Avoid unnecessary travel by making use of video calls and conferencing, telephone and email. When using video conferencing software we consider the ethical merits of the provider Offset any unavoidable emissions investing in carbon capture projects in the UK and worldwide, using Gold Standard credits.

In December 2021, we set out new targets for the coming year as follows: Travel to and from meetings and events in a hybrid vehicle and offset any mileage done using the petrol element of the vehicle. See our Sustainable Travel Policy for more info.

Zero waste

In 2022, we're proud to have achieved our target of sending zero waste to landfill. We have done this by: Applying the waste hierarchy to all purchasing decisions –

- » Reducing the amount of waste we
- » Produce as a business
- » Reusing and repurposing items
- » Recycling
- » Composting
- » As a last resort, sending items for energy recovery
- » Eliminating single use plastic from the business

In 2023 our focus is on inspiring and educating businesses we work with to also remove single use plastic from their operations.

Our 'Planet'

The Sustainable Wedding Alliance is a collective of environmentally conscious businesses all working together to reduce the impact our industry has on our planet.

Shared Responsibility

In addition to the tree planting and carbon capture investments we make as part of our offsetting strategy. We plant trees to build biodiversity in the UK. For every new member that joins the Sustainable Wedding Alliance, we plant a tree in Scotland through the Future Forest Company. All members receive a certificate with the tree type and what3words location.

We support organisations that are changing our planet for the better. Whether it's signing a petition, speaking to our local MP or the All Party Parliamentary Group for Weddings, raising money for charity or planting trees, if it's good for people and planet we'll support it.

In 2021/22 we were proud to support:

Business Declares - the fastest growing network of businesses who acknowledge the Climate and Ecological Emergency. Our aim is to reach Net Zero by 2030 by reducing our emissions and improving our impact on biodiversity. Concern for both people and the planet are not new to us and we look forward to continuing to share our journey and ensuring our voice is part of the collective, resounding call for change. We are certainly not claiming to be perfect, neither are we judging others, instead we are part of a coalition of the willing looking to collaborate and accelerate action while continuing to highlight the challenges and uncomfortable truths.

ClientEarth - an environmental charity with a unique approach, working in partnership across borders, systems and sectors, using the law to fight climate change, tackle pollution, defend wildlife and protect people and planet.

They believe the law is the most powerful tool we have in the fight to protect life on earth, and have proved its impact to tackle global challenges, changing the face of global environmental action. In 2017, they were named the 'UK's most effective environmental organisation.'

Our 'People'

Equality & Diversity

We are committed to equality, providing a service, and following practices which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances.

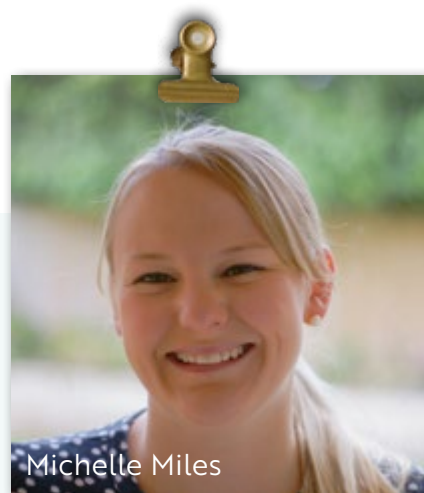
We are committed to providing services to which all clients are entitled regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex

or sexual orientation, offending past, caring responsibilities or social class. We commit to displaying positive imagery of all types of people and all types of weddings.

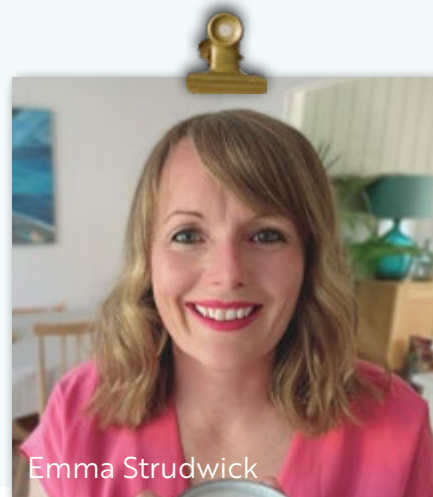
Our services are delivered equally and meet the diverse needs of our service users and clients.

I became climate literate in November 2022 and have started developing a course for the Climate Literacy Project designed for the wedding industry.

We've interviewed various industry professionals talking about how we can drive change in the industry as part our Driving Sustainable Change series.



Michelle Miles



Emma Strudwick

“Wow what a business to work in. Not only am I blown away everyday by the Founder, Michelle’s knowledge and ideas but I also get to work with the loveliest businesses that form part of our membership community. I feel very privileged to be part of the Sustainable Wedding Alliance and have loved watching it grow.”

Emma Strudwick

Sustainable Wedding Awards

Sustainable Wedding Awards
In October 2021 we launched the UK’s first Sustainable Wedding Awards, exclusively for businesses in the wedding industry. The awards recognise and reward wedding businesses for their commitment to sustainability.

As part of the awards we celebrate the work and impact that businesses are doing to balance people, profit and planet. Championing those that are making progress in their sustainability journey and encouraging others around them to do the same.

We highlight the innovative ideas, stories and best practice shown by businesses and individuals, hoping to inspire other businesses to take action.

Our members

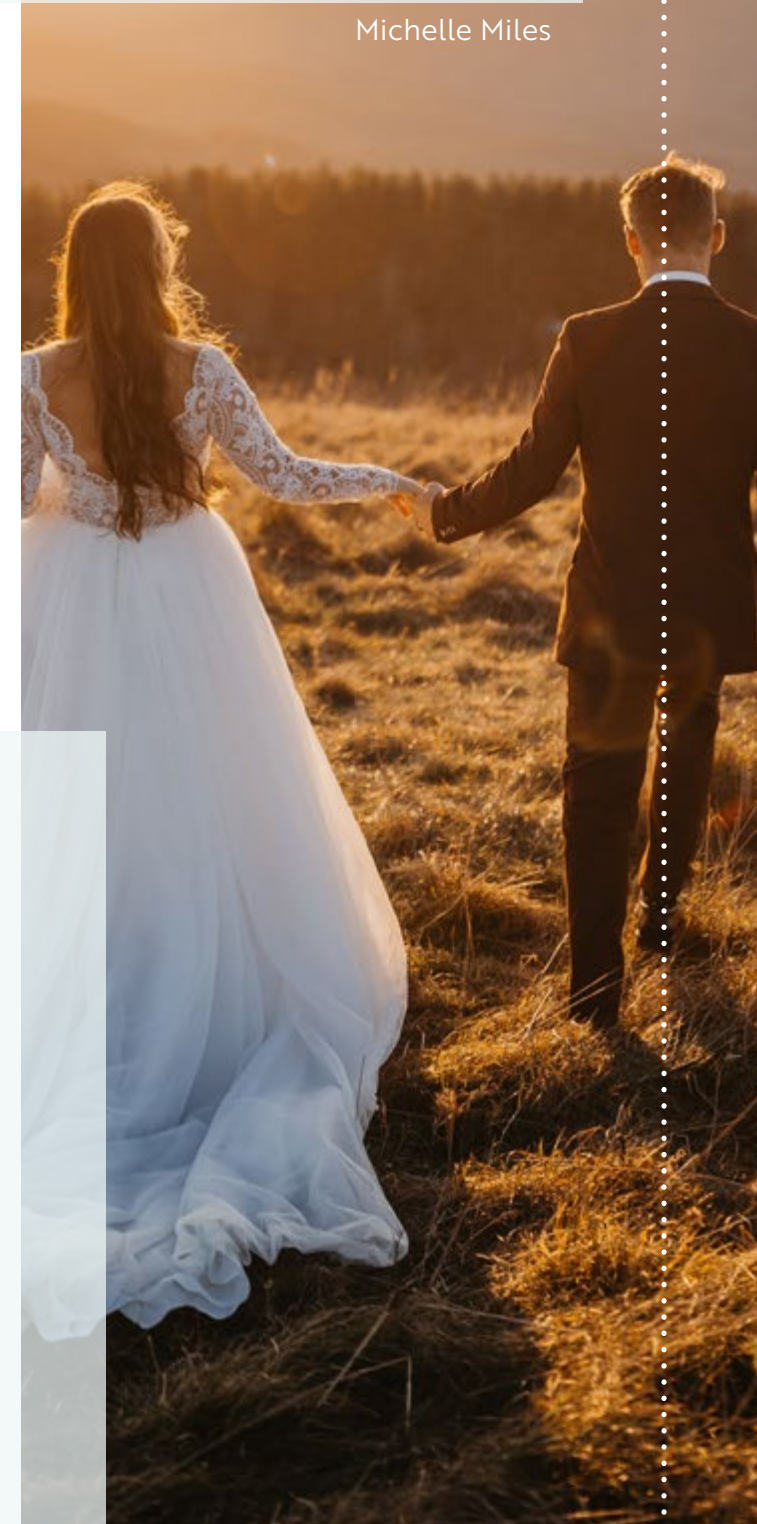
The Sustainable Wedding Alliance is a collective of environmentally conscious businesses all working together to reduce the impact our industry has on our planet. As a community we are leading the change towards to a more sustainable future for the wedding industry. Our focus is on developing tools to help companies make their business more environmentally conscious, educate their clients on what sustainability means for them, and promote sustainable businesses far and wide.

“

We’re excited to be launching the first Sustainable Wedding Awards. We see first-hand the positive impact that businesses are having, not only on their business, staff and supply chain but also their customers – helping move drive a more sustainable wedding industry. It’s about time they are recognised and celebrated for their action.

”

Michelle Miles





The SWA is taking huge strides in making the wedding industry sit up, take stock and change for the better. I started working with the SWA just over a year ago and I can honestly say, hand on heart, that is the best decision I have ever made for my business. The community of like-minded people is so incredibly supportive and the resources available are second to none. Michelle and Emma have helped me go through my business from top to bottom, understand where I can make improvements, and offered no-end of guidance, support and encouragement. My business certainly wouldn't be what it is today without them!

Everything is broken down into small manageable steps and the new platform is going to help everyone even more. I would encourage you to go along to one of the Conscious Connection events and find out what the SWA is all about, because if sustainability and creating a better world is important to you, then I promise you will be joining the most incredible group of people. I am so excited to see what the future holds for the SWA, the changes it can make and I am proud to be part of it.

- Lilac and Lace Floral Design -



Money

They say money makes the world go round, and it's a fundamental part of sustainability. For us transparency when it comes to money is key. In 2022, as part of our preparation to become a B Corporation business, we will have our end of year accounts reviewed by an independent accountant.

As part of ensuring we are financially responsible, we adhere to the ethical marketing pledge and prompt payment code.

Ethical Marketing

We believe that how we sell matters. We are committing to transparent, responsible and honest marketing. Our ethical marketing pledge We put the person before the sale. We respect you and your privacy. We will help you make the best choice for your needs.

We communicate inclusively, truthfully, and clearly. We will not confuse you or hide information from you. We will help all audiences feel welcome. We take responsibility for our part in changing the marketplace. We recognise the need to break the cycle of consumerism. We will continuously review our sales and marketing to ensure they benefit the common good. We count on you to hold us accountable. Please connect with us if you see us not honouring our pledge.

the
ethical
move.

Ethical Banking

We have consciously chosen to bank with Starling Bank. The UK's first digital-only bank, founded by a female.

Prompt Payment

It's important to us that we not only bank with an ethical bank, but manage our finances ethically too. We adhere to the Prompt Payment Code principles:

- » Pay suppliers on time, within agreed terms
- » Give clear guidance to suppliers
- » Encourage good practice
- » Pay 95% of all invoices within 60 days
- » Pay 95% of all invoices within 30 days where the supplier is a small business with fewer than 50 employees
- » Avoid any practices that have an adverse effect on the supply chain.

In 2023, we will make the above formal, by becoming signatories of the Prompt Payment Code.

Insurance

Our current business insurance policies are brokered and underwritten by Hiscox. You can find detailed information on their sustainability progress on their website. In 2023, we plan to do more research into the most environmentally-responsible insurers and to ensure, if we stay with Hiscox, that we do full due diligence on where our money is held.



There are so many reasons to love being a member of the Sustainable Wedding Alliance community - in fact, there are too many to list... feel free to reach out for a copy of our thesis on the benefits! Community is the best place to start - we treasure our connection with others in the wedding industry who share our values and believe that our industry can be a force for good. The membership platform connects us with other members all working together so that we can share best practice and create a more positive future for our businesses and our planet - it's all about those #littlewins. The practical and ever growing resources, tutorials and training sessions keep us focused, inspired and constantly learning new things giving us a daily sense of pride and empowerment. It's just too easy to feel analysis paralysis around green issues and too overwhelmed to know where to start but now there is a simple solution - The Sustainable Wedding Alliance. Check out one of their local or national networking events to find out more.

- Sheepdrove -



I have told a few other friends about our fabulous group ... Thank you for a wonderful first year and here's to me finally completing my accreditation in 2023

- Emily Brown Photography -



The Sustainable Wedding Alliance is just a brilliant resource. Their weekly articles and blogs are amazing for sustainability features and ideas. They have a very practical focus, although it's called the Sustainable Wedding Alliance, their resources aren't just for weddings and can be transferred to almost any business.

They also provide a great facility for networking, collaboration and just a sense of regularly communicating about great sustainability ideas. I would highly recommend this Alliance.

- The Wellbeing Farm -



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Get in touch

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