

# HEXCITE

## ESG Impact Report 2023

**Inspiration.  
Innovation.  
Transformation.  
Preservation.**



**blaze** cygnia

# ESG STATEMENT 2023

We are pleased to publish Hexcite's Environmental, Social and Governance [ESG] Impact Report for 2023, demonstrating our progress in environmental stewardship, the nurturing of our employees and community support.

**This report details the year 1 January - 31 December 2023**



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# FOREWORD FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



WES MULLIGAN, CEO

Hexcite plays a leading role in the UK signage industry. Our two companies, Blaze Signs and Cygnia Maintenance, manufacture, install and maintain signs in multiple markets, with a particularly strong presence in the retail and essential retail markets. Our customer focus, national footprint and colleague capability is, in my opinion, second to none in our core markets. In fact, Blaze Signs were voted Signage company of the year (30 employees+ category) at the 2024 Signage and Wrap Industry Awards.

A key factor in winning this peer assessed award was our commitment to ESG:

- **Guided by the SIGNS values, each colleague contributes to the vision of a waste-free world**
- **Efforts to reduce our environmental impact have resulted in a 24% reduction on CO<sub>2</sub>e per £m of sales value from our baseline year of 2019**
- **Our approach to wellbeing, which has focused on employee health, safety, and mental wellbeing**

Culture is something that you sense. Culture guides the way that you do things. Culture changes gradually. In the last year, we have made step changes with the so-called “soft” aspects of management- the functions that underpin the culture of every organisation. We have persevered in our efforts to bring ESG to the forefront of our strategy and culture in 2023, from overhauling our people practices, to setting targets for emission reduction. I hope you enjoy reading this report, as we walk you through the practical changes, as well as improvements made in the last year.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the ESG team in Blaze and Cygnia that drive this change agenda, as well as all our colleagues who make our ambitious targets a reality. We look forward to reporting back on our continued progress in 2024, as we work towards even more ambitious targets.

# ABOUT US

Hexcite is made up of two established, market-leading signage specialists – Blaze Signs and Cygnia Maintenance. Blaze Signs operates two factories, which are situated in Birmingham and in Broadstairs, Kent, with 187 employees. Cygnia Maintenance is also situated in Broadstairs with 81 employees.

Our clients benefit from a team of experts across the two businesses, all of whom provide a diverse range of products and solutions with sustainability at the core.

Today we deliver the most impactful brand, communications and marketing touchpoints across the complete retail and business environment. Each business has spent decades becoming leaders in powerful, single-point retail and brand solutions that deliver incredible products and services, completing projects for some of the largest companies in the UK.

# MEET OUR CLIENTS

We're trusted by household names across retail, leisure, manufacturing and beyond to create, install and maintain visual branding across the UK and globally.



# OUR VALUES

## S

Safe 

We are safe. Health and Safety is a priority in everything we do. Providing a legally, physically and mentally safe space for our employees and others to work in.

## I

Improve 

We constantly improve. We are committed to a continual cycle of review and improvement for all areas of the business.

## G

Goal driven 

We are driven by common goals. We set SMART and mutually agreed goals that meet our customer and business needs.

## N

Network 

We are a network. We collaborate and communicate as a network. We work together as one team.

## S

Service 

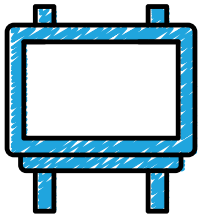
We offer timely and high quality customer service. Everyday is about exceeding expectations for our customers and each other.

# OUR VISION



## MODERN EFFICIENT OPERATIONS AND A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

- Implementing and measuring high employee engagement
- Delivering high value, low waste, sustainable business processes
- Providing premium facilities aligned to brand
- Being a growth focused, profitable business that will provide opportunities for customers and employees alike

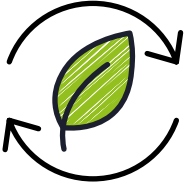


## LEADING UK BASED PREMIUM SIGNAGE COMPANY

- Maintaining a dominant market position with defined brands
- Delivering high customer satisfaction through:
  - Manufacturing industry leading quality signage
  - Offering reliable and timely delivery
  - Communicating responsively and clearly

All a part of  
the same wave.

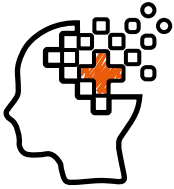
# HIGHLIGHTS



This year we have completed further work with our suppliers to improve our data visibility, including the use of dashboards for our energy, enabling us to fully understand our energy consumption.

We have initiated discussions, and preparation work has started, with an energy management company, who undertook an energy efficiency gap analysis of our Broadstairs site. **This will see the installation of both hardware and software to our facilities, enabling us to access live energy consumption data and continuously track our usage.**

We have also continued work with our customers to offer sustainable alternatives, as detailed on [P18](#) with Waitrose at their store in Sudbury



Our work with educational institutions in our communities reached new levels **during 2023 - with over 250 hours dedicated to participating in reading sessions and employability days.**

Our design team worked with students over six weeks at the University of Kent to teach the fundamentals of signage and wayfinding design. Additionally, many of our team members conducted mock interviews with secondary school students, preparing them for the future workplace.



This year we have made further investment and enhancements to our **Health & Safety structure, investing over £130,000 - a 30% increase on our £100,000 investment in 2022.** As a result, we're keeping ahead of the ever-changing requirements of our customers and regulatory bodies.

A trial of departmental 'surgery' style 1-2-1 drop-in sessions on Health & Safety, which proved so successful that in 2024 it has been extended to all teams and departments.

**Our objective remains clear:**

- **To reduce our impact**
- **Create equitable solutions**
- **Take care of our employees**
- **Drive broader change within the industry and our communities**



**INSPIRATION. INNOVATION.  
TRANSFORMATION. PRESERVATION.**





# THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) were developed as 17 overarching goals that provide a global framework for peace and prosperity in consideration of the environment. Here at Hexcite, we have identified those SDGs where we can have a particular impact.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT

*Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on this page:*



SDG and target	Our goal	Achievements	Commitments
<b>SDG 12</b> <b>Target 12.5</b>	Substantially reduce waste generation	Understand Cygnia's waste outputs	Achieved our target to record and track Cygnia's waste by the end of 2023
<b>SDG 13</b> <b>Target 13.2</b>	Integrate climate change measures into policies and planning	Install vehicle telematics in all fleet	We have now installed telematics in all vehicles, which allows us to record mileage, as well as CO <sub>2</sub> e and driving behaviours  We established our total tCO <sub>2</sub> e in FY22 as an initial baseline, then expanded the scope of our accounting for FY23
<b>SDG 15</b>	Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems	Introduce Community Days doing litter picking	15 staff to be involved during each session, with four two-hour sessions planned across the next 12 months

Cygnia waste is now tracked, and we are recording complete waste figures. For FY24 we will strive for a better understanding and tracking of the waste from site, with a view to reduce total waste

We will track and monitor our emissions to establish a baseline for reduction from FY25 onwards

We are aiming for a 3% reduction in tCO<sub>2</sub> emitted by FY24

We have reorganised this initiative for FY24, appointing responsible employees for different areas of our ESG strategy plan. For FY24, litter picking will be completed by 10 staff across three two-hour sessions

**OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR PEOPLE**

*Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on this page:*



SDG and target		Our goal	Achievements	Commitments
<b>SDG 8 Target 8.6</b>	Promote youth employment, education and training	Hexcite run The Blaze Academy for trainees, apprenticeships and internal training.	There are over 200 courses available to employees on H&S and HR.  Progress meetings are used to capture training needs	For FY24, we have three employees in our Blaze Academy and two apprentices in position
<b>SDG 4 Target 4.2</b>	Equal access to quality pre-primary education	Staff to aid local schools by conducting reading sessions	Hexcite provide 42 hours per annum to a local school and in FY23 we contributed 150 hours to educational projects	We will continue supporting local Education in FY24, dedicating 25 hours to One-to-One Interview Days with 3 employees
<b>SDG 3 Target 3.8</b>	Achieve universal health coverage	Improvement of healthcare offering	Distributed a monthly healthcare newsletter per month, promoting Simply Health Benefits, health awareness days and suggestions for healthy living  Created a second newsletter based on Menopause awareness and support	We want to continue to provide regular updates throughout 2024 to staff and promote Simply Health Benefits  We will be working with online clinic STELLA on Menopause support for staff. We will also roll out a Menopause App for staff
<b>SDG 8 Target 8.8</b>	Protect labour rights and promote safe working environments	Investment of £100,000 for Health & Safety for 2022/23 throughout the business	We overhauled our accident and incident reporting to drive improvements across the business. We provided H&S training across the group  We introduced more user-friendly processes and forms to make it easier to report incidents	We will continue work in this area in 2024  This process will remain in place in 2024
<b>SDG 8 Target 8.2</b>	Diversify, innovate and upgrade for economic productivity	Develop staff intranet to enhance internal communications  HR system for online management of holidays and sick days  Company-wide training and development	Staff are now able to access all company policies and compliance documents  We have identified a HR software to support us in our compliance and people practices	This will be ongoing in 2024  We will be onboarding all staff to the system to book holidays and time off by end of 2024  HR employee data and training records to be fully digitised by the end of 2025.

# ENVIRONMENT - OUR PLANET



# 0%

Waste-to-landfill in 2023

## HEXCITE'S CARBON FOOTPRINT

Calculating our carbon footprint is essential to monitor and reduce our emissions in line with recommendations from international climate advisory groups, as well as achieve the UK government's target to achieve Net Zero across all sectors by 2050.

We began by measuring and monitoring our greenhouse gas emissions through legislated processes such as Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) and the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS).

Having established our baseline year for Scope 1 & 2 emissions (and Scope 3 business-related car travel)<sup>1</sup> in 2019, we had a benchmark against which we can measure and evaluate the impact of our activities. This includes introducing technology, changing behaviours, and seeking more sustainable travel options.

<sup>1</sup>Scope 1 Emissions are direct greenhouse (GHG) emissions that occur from sources that are controlled or owned by an organisation (e.g., emissions associated with fuel combustion in boilers, furnaces, vehicles)

Scope 2 Emissions are indirect GHG emissions associated with the purchase of electricity, steam, heat, or cooling. Although Scope 2 emissions physically occur at the facility where they are generated, they are accounted for in an organisation's GHG inventory because they are a result of the organisation's energy use

Scope 3 Emissions are emissions are the result of activities from assets not owned or controlled by the reporting organisation, but that the organisation indirectly affects in its value chain



Carbon intensity ratios (Hexcite's intensity ratios are location based)

Activity	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019-2023 % change
Tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e per tonne of substrates purchased	11.32	9.37	4.85	5.93 <sup>2</sup>	3.96	-65%
Tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e per £ million sales revenue	81.03	64.7	73.41	60.43	61.24	-24%
Tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e per m <sup>3</sup> footprint of buildings	0.043	0.035	0.037	0.037	0.038	-12%
Tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e per full time employee	6.82	5.59	6.62	6.07	6.26	-8%

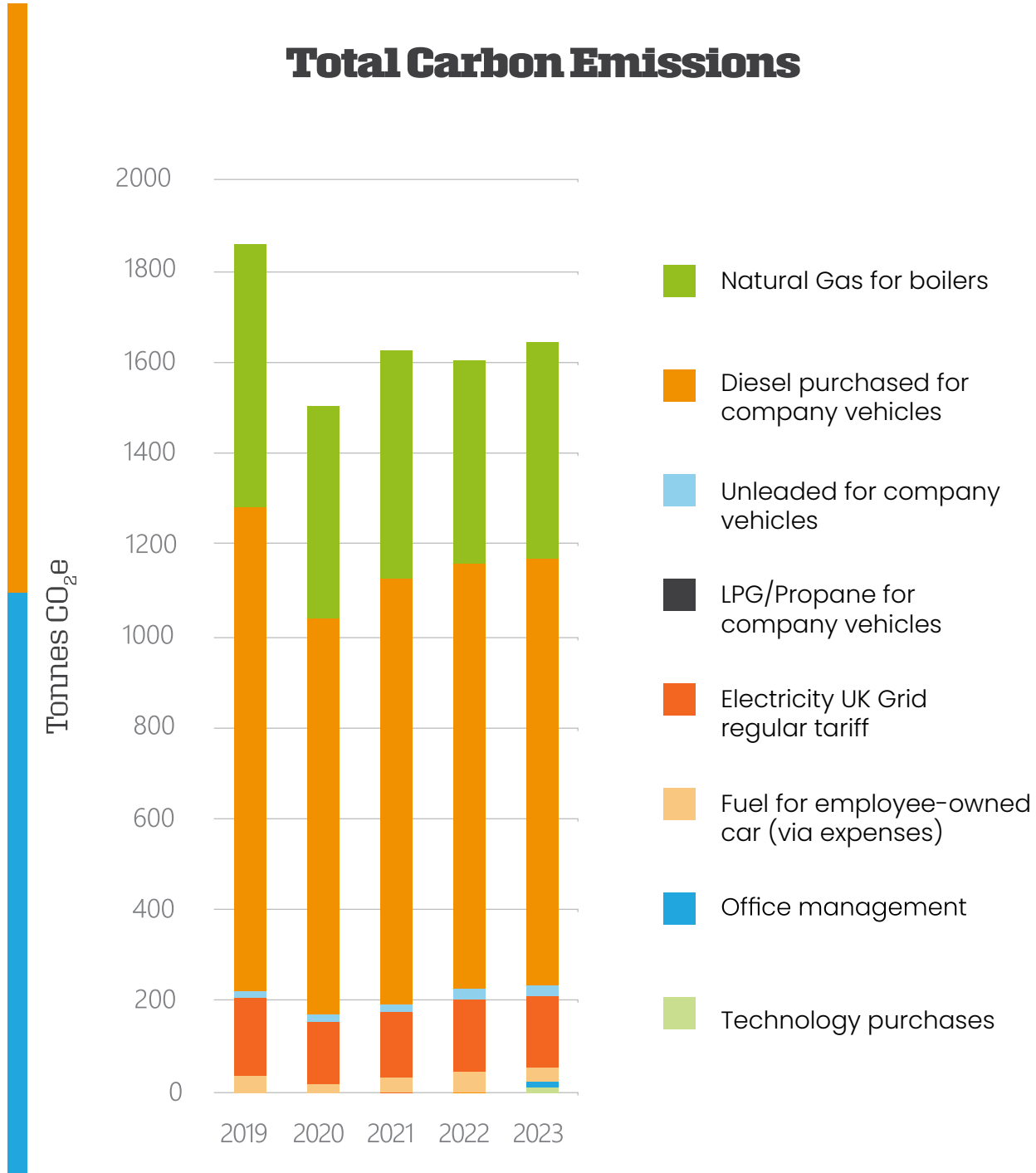
An intensity ratio is a way of defining our gross emissions data in relation to an appropriate business metric, such as tonnes of carbon for every £m of turnover, or tonnes of carbon per m<sup>2</sup> footprint of buildings. This allows us to compare our performance over time and accounts for jumps

(and slumps) in sales and growth. With continued growth and expansion on the horizon, to stay on course to achieve our carbon reduction targets, we need to ensure that our emissions increase remains less than our revenue increase year on year.

<sup>2</sup>Some CO<sub>2</sub>e values for 2022 have altered slightly as a result of retrospective reporting of the emissions from the UK grid in 2022 as a result of an increase in renewable energy generated

# Total carbon emissions 1,641 tCO<sub>2</sub> (FY 22 1,601 tCO<sub>2</sub>)

## Total Carbon Emissions



Carbon Emmissions Category	tCO <sub>2</sub> e				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Scope 1	1,649.53	1,350.41	1,446.67	1,399.43	1,433.17
Scope 2 (market based)	169.53	64.7	73.41	60.43	61.24
Scope 2 (location based)	169.53	133.15	142.65	158.11	154.82
Scope 3*	36.93	19.26	33.06	43.83	53.34
Total (market based)	1,855.99	1,502.82	1,622.28	1,601.37	1,641.33
Total (location based)	1,855.99	1,502.82	1,622.28	1,601.37	1,641.33

\* Scope 3 only includes car travel by employee-owned vehicles purchased goods (office equipment and technology purchase)

Our carbon footprint has increased by 40 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e since last year, which is an increase of 2.5%. Of this increase, 21 tonnes is due to the inclusion of technology purchases - such as IT equipment - and capital goods in the 2023 assessment for the first time. The other 20 tonnes is mainly due to an increase in natural gas use, as a result of business growth (for our plans of how to reduce our use of natural gas, see the details of our new energy management plan, on the next page).

# OUR ENERGY USE: A DIVE INTO HEXCITE'S ENERGY USE

## ENERGY USE ACROSS BUSINESS

Activity	Scope	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Natural gas for the boilers	1	kWh	3,151,750.00	2,556,687.00	2,737,230.00	2,415,124.00	2,566,141.00
Diesel purchased for company vehicles	1	kWh	4,384,817.52	3,576,219.86	3,856,561.93	3,859,552.26	3,881,611.56
Unleaded for company vehicles	1	kWh	62,161.66	83,443.63	62,600.32	111,315.82	114,230.26
LPG/ Propane for company vehicles	1	kWh	2,796.40	2,796.40	4,567.50	5,024.25	4,991.63
Electricity UK grid regular tariff	1	kWh	663,262.00	571,099.00	611,844.00	817,610.00	800,618.70
Car travel for employee-owned via expenses	1	kWh	122,879.36	64,078.23	110,007.36	145,828.85	107,504.85
<b>Total</b>			8,387,666.94	6,854,324.12	7,382,811.11	7,354,455.18	7,475,097.99

We are focused on using less energy across our operations, beginning with how we design, operate, and maintain our equipment and processes. To closely monitor our usage, an energy dashboard provides us with visibility of our current and historical energy consumption and costs.

Additionally, in the coming year we are partnering with an energy management company, with the aim of reducing our energy use by around 25% across our sites. This includes the installation of a 'plug and play' hardware solution, which will allow us to track consumption at building, floor, room, and asset level. This energy data feeds through to a cloud software system, which will provide us with a live dashboard to help us capture any spikes or inconsistencies.

## Our Goals for 2023 - how we did:

- **100% Renewable Energy** (gas and electricity) tariff, saving 191 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (based on 2022)  
**ACHIEVED 93% OF THIS TARGET**
- **Continue to use energy dashboard to impact behavioural change**  
**ONGOING**
- **Continue to replace natural gas with electric alternatives - a total change would save us 444 tCO<sub>2</sub>e annually (based on 2022)** **ONGOING**
- **Vehicle Fleet: Installed vehicle telematics throughout our entire fleet to record fuel usage and carbon emissions at our Birmingham site**

## New Goals for 2024:

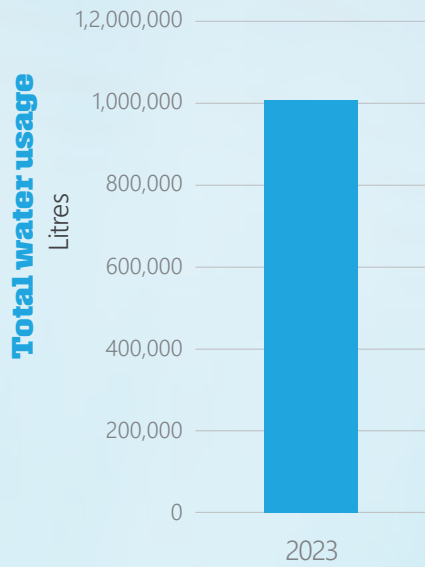
- **Introduce and install an Energy Management Software/Hardware system to our Broadstairs Sites**
- **Once in place, use this to capture accurate energy consumption data and identify where we can reduce our energy usage, emissions and costs**
- **If successful, roll out the system to our Birmingham site by the end of 2024**



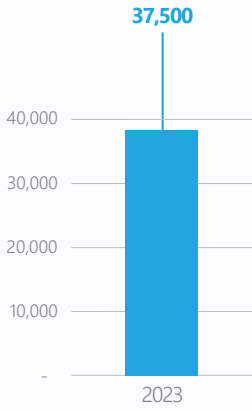
# WATER

We predominantly use water to clean the paint shop and for our water jet cutter. This year, we measured our water usage for the first time, to get a grasp of our consumption and identify opportunities for reduction.

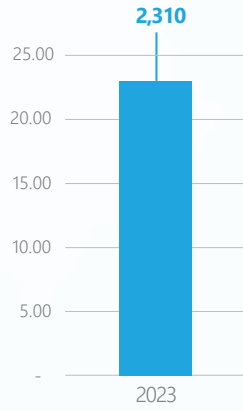
## WATER USAGE INTENSITY RATIOS



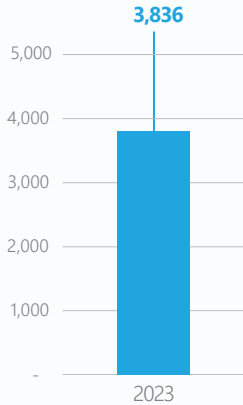
Litres per £ million sales revenue



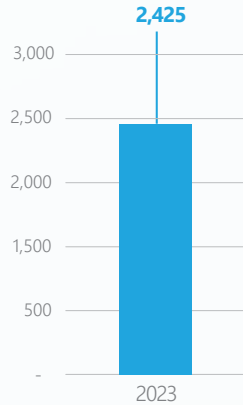
Litres per m2 footprint of buildings



Litres per full time employee



Litres per tonne of substrate purchased



While not having a direct impact on our carbon footprint, using less water reduces our environmental impact and helps us reduce costs.

## CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

### SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS WITH WAITROSE

In 2023, we worked closely with the Design & Implementation teams at Waitrose to find sustainable material alternatives for signage at their store in Sudbury. The aim was to reduce both the customer's and our own impact on the environment across the full lifecycle of signage—from product through to disposal.

The solution was to use PVC-free vinyl graphics printed with solvent-free ink across the store. PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride) is known to be harmful to the environment due to its production process and disposal. PVC contains additives such as phthalates and heavy metals, which can leach out over time and pose health risks, therefore its removal results in healthier, safer indoor environments. Additionally, when traditional PVC-vinyl is used, it needs to be replaced after a certain period of time, something PVC-free vinyl doesn't have to contend with.

All perimeter letters were made from acrylic, since it is a highly recyclable material. Other sustainability-orientated items implemented were:

- **Collection menu, 'returns panel' and the reverse of the John Lewis window sign have recyclable and interchangeable cardboard graphics.**
- **PVC-free vinyl and solvent free ink were also used in the wall-mounted stretch graphics found along the checkouts wall.**
- **Cork graphics with laser engraved graphics are recyclable and fixed with 'dual lock' so the graphics can be changed during its lifecycle.**
- **Fruit & Veg area:**
  - **Island rail signage has cardboard graphics on hooks, so they are now moveable and interchangeable.**

**- Chiller signage is now hooked on aluminium panels with interchangeable cardboard graphics.**

All of the design considerations of sustainability, environmentally friendly materials, and an emphasis on extending a sign's life, resulted in Waitrose's most sustainable store yet.



# WASTE

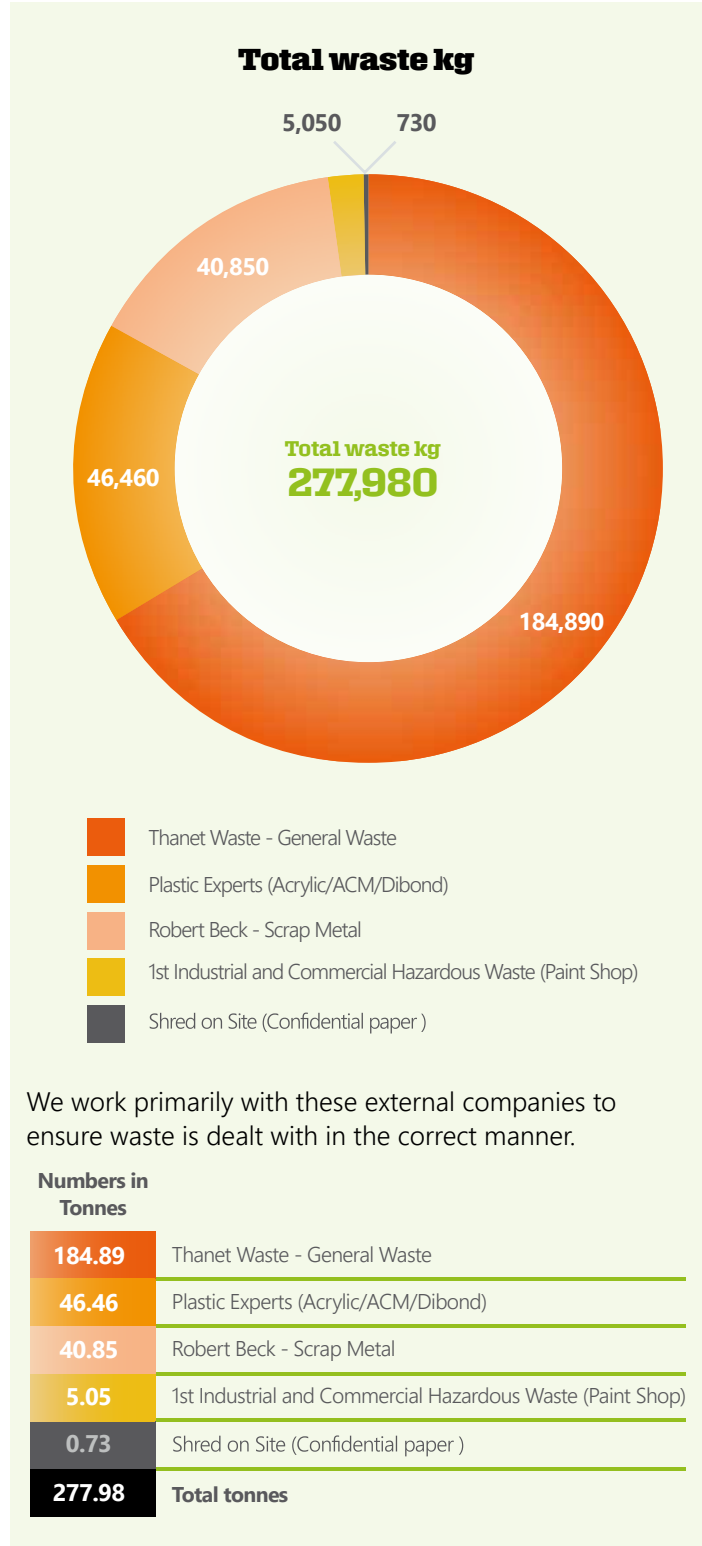
## OUR WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Hexcite’s complete service provides clients with creative signage, with minimal environmental impact.

Our use of digital technology cuts out waste in development and concepts, and ensures unparalleled accuracy and consistency in production.

Our considered use of materials ensures signs are recyclable and degrade safely when disposed of. We also look carefully into the installation of signage and plastic alternatives wherever possible. Additionally, we ensure chemicals used in the cleaning and maintenance processes will not be damaging to plants or animals.

- **Thanet Waste** is responsible for the bulk of our waste, our waste streams can be seen on the following page
- **Plastic Experts** recycles the specialised plastic that is left over from our acrylics shop
- **Robert Beck** is responsible for scrap metal (stainless steel, alloy and copper) which is sold on and recycled into the economy
- **1st Industrial and Commercial** disposes of the hazardous paint waste from paint bays, as required by regulation 12 of the Waste and Regulations 2011



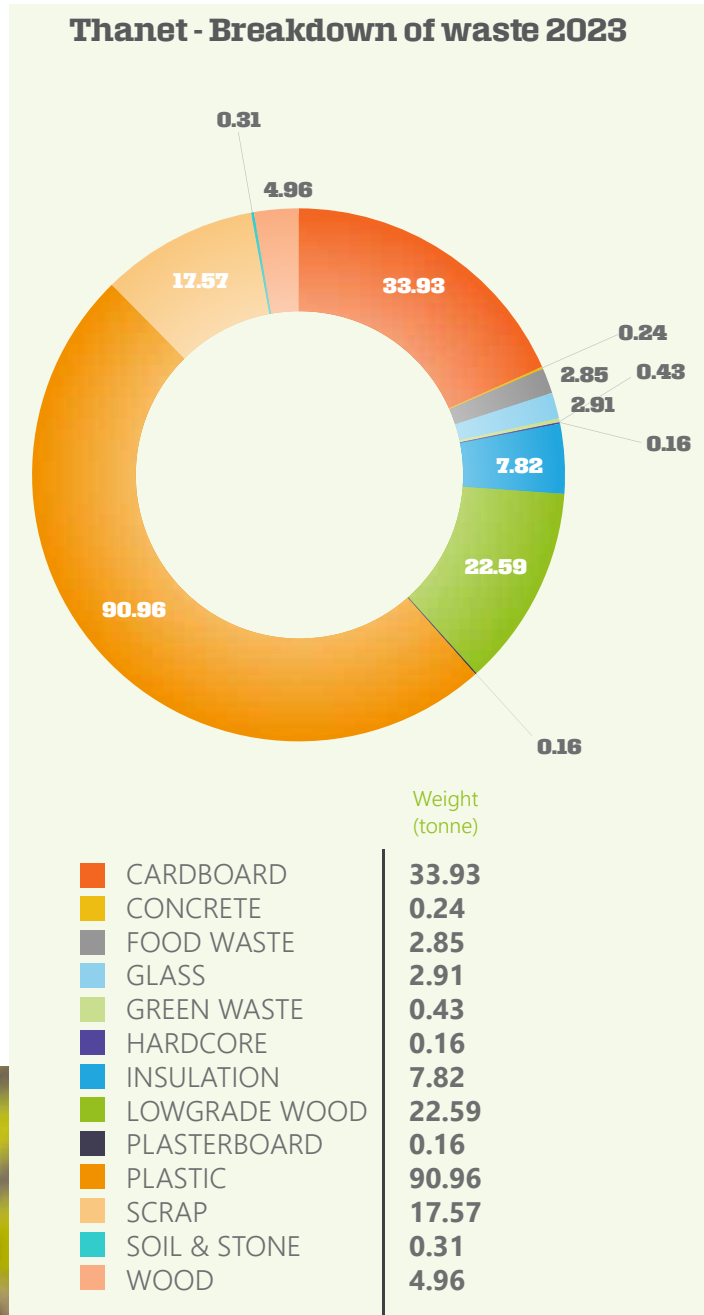
We work primarily with these external companies to ensure waste is dealt with in the correct manner.

**184.44 tonnes of waste was collected in 2022. All material was 100% recycled, and we operate a 0% waste-to-landfill.**

**THANET WASTE - WASTE RECYCLING AND DISPOSAL**

All waste collected from Blaze is received into the Thanet Waste site and emptied into the main warehouse, with all larger items segregated via specialised machinery. Any residual waste is put onto a conveyor and separated by hand into the relevant 'bins', such as plastic, paper or wood. Every single item of waste that comes through this system is sorted and recycled – here are a few examples:

- **Plastics:** these are stripped down and sold to a local company to make plastic piping
- **Wood:** this is chipped down and sold to a local company for fuel
- **Cardboard:** sorted and bundled and sent to cardboard recycling companies
- **Scrap:** sorted and bundled and sent to the relevant recycling companies



**PLASTIC RECYCLING**

A total of 46.46 tonnes of plastic waste was recycled with specialist company Plastic Waste, which is primarily composed of PMMA and PVCA Foam Board. Once sorted, there are two ways to recycle this material - mechanical, where it is washed, ground and melted; or chemical, where it's broken down at a molecular level into monomers, to form new polymers. Once recycled, the plastics can be redistributed into supply chains to begin the cycle all over again.

According to the British Plastic Foundation, approximately 1.4 metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> are saved when recycling 1 tonne of plastic waste, so this equates to 65.04 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> saved. This factor takes into account the energy savings and emission reduction associated with recycling.

In addition, all LEDs, Power Supply Units (PSUs) and other lighting used in our productions are fully recyclable under the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive.

**SCRAP METAL**

Our metals are recycled and sold into the economy, typically by being sorted, shredded and then processed.

**PAINT WASTE**

**Hazardous Waste Collection 2023 (Paint Shop)**

Container Type	Weight KG
IBC and Pallet	1,150
IBC	3,500
IBC	400
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,050</b>

**We operate a 0% waste-to-landfill policy across all our waste streams**

**Goals:**

- **Recycling - increase the number of recycled paper and packing materials**
- **Reduce waste - new and improved printers have been installed and we record and monitor paper usage per user. In the next year we want to continue staff engagement on this to reduce wastage**
- **Sustainable Materials - continue to swap out to more sustainable options where we can**

# OUR SUPPLIERS

As we have embedded sustainability into our corporate strategy, we've also extended this ethos to our supply chain, encouraging good governance practices and ethical management of environmental, social, and economic impacts. We outline Hexcite's expectations to uphold our ethical values in our supplier code of conduct and modern slavery policy, which are shared with all suppliers.

15 Suppliers and the feedback we received was encouraging and positive. It also opened discussion opportunities to talk with them about their plans and projects for the future. These conversations, together with the results of the survey, have given us confidence in being able to offer our clients sustainable alternatives as a standard, using responsibly sourced materials.

## ESG AND OUR SUPPLY CHAIN

In 2023 we sent out an ESG Survey to our top 15 Suppliers to understand their current actions and processes. We received responses from all

Our Goal for 2024, working in partnership with our suppliers, is to have sustainable material alternatives to offer our clients.

### Buying Local

- **100% of our Tier 1 suppliers (these are direct suppliers of the final product) are based in the UK. Having local suppliers has many key benefits, including:**
- **Generating a positive impact for the communities in which we operate**
- **Reduces Scope 3 emissions in the supply chain**
- **Greater control of our supply chain**
- **Reduced supply chain costs**

### Buying Right

- **When choosing the materials we work with, we ensure they are produced and discarded of responsibly**
- **70% of the Aluminium Composite (ACM) we use is made from recycled materials and it is 100% recyclable**
- **3% of the acrylic we use is made from recycled materials**
- **50% of the PVC foam we procure is made from recycled materials**
- **100% of the packaging card and foam we use is made from recycled materials**
- **38% of the bubble wrap we are supplied is made from recycled products**
- **To reduce the number of deliveries, we now use consignment stock in our factory on larger volume usage items<sup>3</sup>**

**100%**  
of our Tier 1 suppliers are based in the UK

<sup>3</sup> Consignment stock is stock held at Hexcite but belonging to the supplier. We record our usage and are billed monthly for that usage from the supplier, this reducing the number of deliveries and associated emissions

# SOCIAL: OUR PEOPLE

## Number of employees: 268 at end of 2023

Cygnia 81 | Blaze 187

### EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

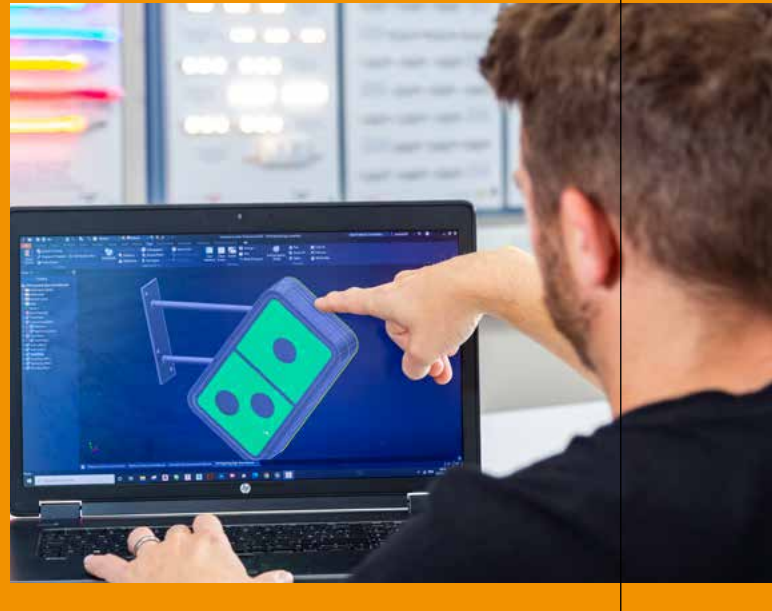
WeThrive is an employee engagement system we use to collect and deliver results for continuous improvement. All employees across Blaze Signs and Cygnia Maintenance are asked to complete a survey covering 4 indicators of engagement: cognitive, capability, connection, and confidence.

Our latest WeThrive survey was published in August 2023, which highlighted key areas in which would could improve the business. As a result of those surveys we have:

- **Improved the flexibility of taking holiday**
- **Increased Director communications**
- **Included anonymous suggestion channels to gather feedback**
- **Rolled out increased communications via e-mail and newsletters**

In FY24 we will implement new Health and Safety and Human Resources support software, Atlas, for compliance. This will allow us to compile our training register, assign training courses, hold the skills matrix of each of our employees and it will be used for online annual leave booking. The Atlas software also includes more detailed reporting on employee diversity and gender, giving us greater oversight on our employee demographic base. Additionally, the software offers a robust support service, with employment law and H&S legal advice lines to assist with queries from H&S and HR representatives.

**In FY24 we also intend to increase our communication with employees around the healthcare plan that we offer, showcasing the mental health, legal and financial 24-hour helpline, 24/7 GP consultation, money back on health care services, as well as discounts on selected gyms and health-related products.**



### Main Workforce

	Total FTE at start of FY	Total FTE at end of FY
Female	54	50
Male	211	218
Non-binary	0	0

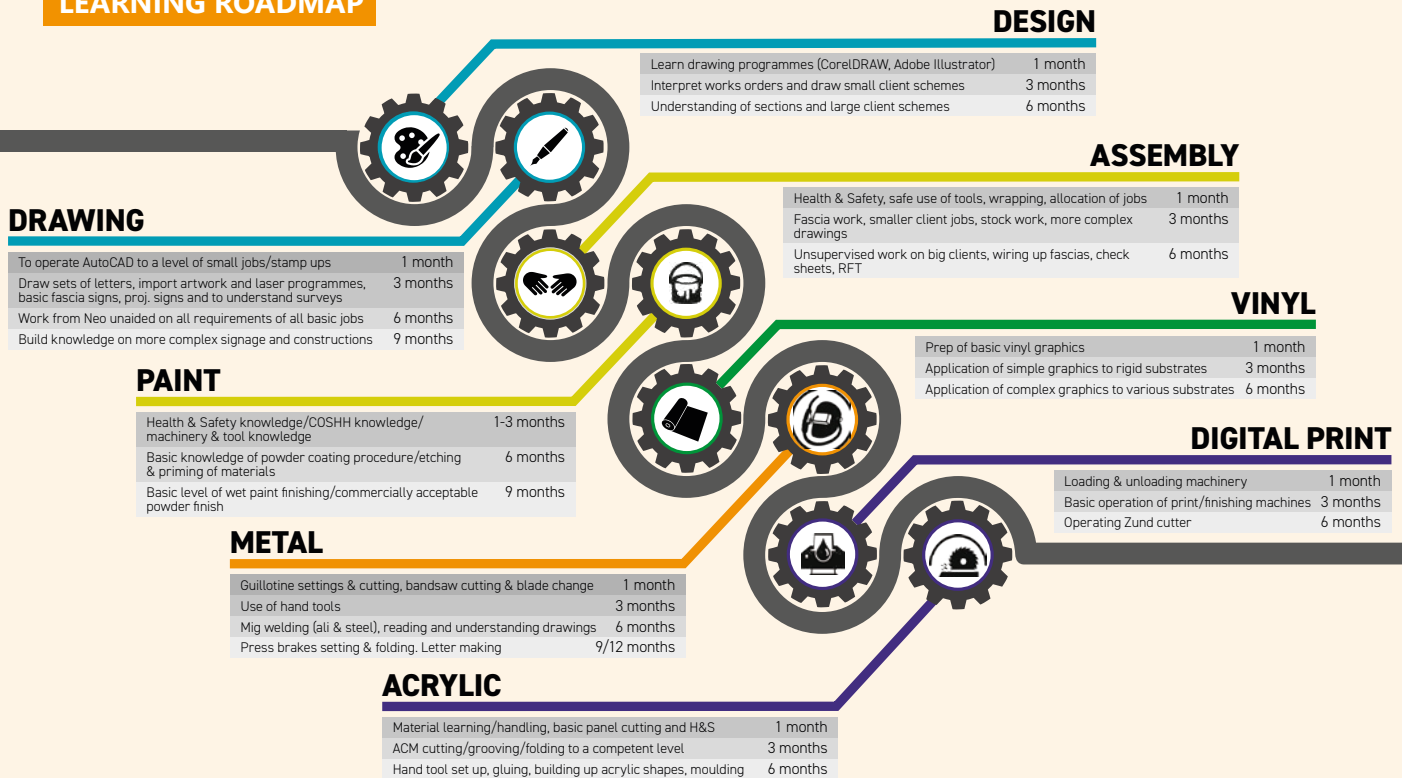
# BLAZE ACADEMY

The Blaze Academy was formed 18 months ago by Gareth Locke, Blaze Signs Operations Director. The focus was on trainees and apprenticeships primarily, but also the tracking of training and skill development within the business. The Blaze Academy also hopes to future proof the business by retaining skills and knowledge within the company.

Blaze started by looking at what had been successful and less successful in the past, as well as the infrastructure required to support both new learners and existing staff in the workplace. Firstly, we changed the offering in the manufacturing area to an engineering apprenticeship, to attract more people and account for a wider range of skills. We then introduced two entry methods into the business: a trainee route and an apprenticeship route. As a result, we have made better connections and relationships with apprenticeship providers and enhanced our support infrastructure and apprenticeship action team.

In addition to the apprenticeship framework, we created the Blaze Academy Manufacturing roadmap, devised with experienced supervisors to clarify, and plan, where a trainee and apprentice should be during their career at Blaze. When a trainee joins Blaze, they become part of the academy and work through the roadmap stages to allow them to become part-skilled after 12 months. This covers various areas of the signage creation process- from design, production, manufacturing to assembly and installation.

## LEARNING ROADMAP







***"It was quite a proud moment, coming into the department and being the only girl"***

- Lauren

**Our Blaze Academy joiners also benefit from a new mentoring scheme, where joiners are paired with a mentor to guide them and provide support. This also provides our mentors with the opportunity to develop from the scheme in a leadership role.**

**The Blaze Academy initially focused on entry level roles, but is planning to extend the Academy to all training facets within the business in 2024 and beyond!**

### **APPRENTICESHIPS**

Lauren and Archie are both Engineering Apprentices in our Metal Shop, an incredibly important part of the sign-making process. These two young engineers-in-the-making have been learning the artform that is letter making and the construction of large aluminium-based fascia signage-all while gaining valuable insights from their experienced colleagues at our headquarters in Broadstairs.

Lauren and Archie were coming into their new roles with no previous experience working with metal, since it's not often that schools have the facilities to teach this, nor is metalworking part of the curriculum. The metal shop department members were quick to give encouragement. "Everyone else is just trying to (make) you better..." says Archie. "If I need help I can ask for it." Lauren adds, "When I came in, I had no idea what to expect... But I think the thing that probably stands out most is how nice the people are here. Like how everyone is just so friendly."

Lauren is the only female working in her department. "It was quite a proud moment, coming into the department and being the only girl – other than the Vinyl Department – in the factory, but everyone has been really nice, treating me like anyone else."

Lauren's experience highlights the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace, demonstrating that gender should never be a barrier to pursuing one's passion or career aspirations in engineering. Our organisations' values are Safety, Improvement, Goal driven, Networking and Service – with the last value being particularly important in this context. We ensure that our team members strive to provide the best service not only to our customers but to our colleagues too, and we ensure we treat each other with respect and kindness. It is fantastic to see the Blaze Team practice what they preach, treating everyone in the business equally- irrespective of their gender or background.

Apprenticeships are not merely a pathway to employment, but a catalyst for personal growth, professional development, and social mobility. Through continuous investment in apprenticeship programs and a commitment to nurturing diverse talent through the Blaze Academy, we can contribute to building a skilled and inclusive workforce for the future that bridges the skills gap that many UK-based companies are facing in today's age.



## HEXCITE IN THE COMMUNITY

### EDUCATION SUPPORT

#### WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

In the last year we have supported a wide range of education-related events and initiatives across our local community. Our initiatives have included:

- **Employability days focusing on performing mock interviews with students**
- **Talks about the world of work**
- **Collaborative units where representatives from Blaze work with both Dover Technical College and the University of Kent on content focused on design and signage**
- **Reading support sessions with the Royal Harbour Academy**
- **Supporting careers fairs in Canterbury and Thanet**
- **Participation in a local school Apprenticeship Q&A session. Two of our Blaze Signs home grown apprentices attended the session and answered questions from Students**

#### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

All of these initiatives help us become a more socially responsible business; allowing us to give back to the communities we serve, as well as help guide the next generation of engineers, designers and business leaders. Our presence and help allows students to receive ideas and guidance from industry professionals.

# GOVERNANCE



## COMPLIANCE AND SECURITY

Compliance and security are an integral part of our business, so we ensure that the services we provide meet essential security regulations and governing frameworks. Our certifications and accreditations include the following:

**ISO 14001** (Both Blaze & Cygnia) - ISO 14001 sets out the criteria for an environmental management system. It maps out a framework that we can follow to set up an effective environmental system.

Designed for any type of organisation, regardless of its activity or sector, it provides assurance to company management and employees, as well as external stakeholders, that environmental impact is being measured and improved.

**ISO 9001** (Both Blaze & Cygnia) ISO 9001 sets out the criteria for a quality management system and is the only ISO standard that can be certified to (although this is not a requirement).

This standard is based on a number of quality management principles, including a strong customer focus, the motivation and implication of top

management, the process approach and continual improvement. Using ISO 9001 helps ensure that customers get consistent, good-quality products and services, which in turn brings many business benefits.

Safe Contractor Accreditation (Cygnia) – Their SSIP<sup>4</sup> and PAS91<sup>5</sup> contractor accreditation scheme checks that we meet the necessary requirements around health and safety, equal opportunities, diversity, and environmental management practices.

**ISO 45001** (Both Blaze & Cygnia) - ISO 45001 is a Management System for Occupational Health and Safety. Building on the principles of the HSE's Plan, Do, Check, Act model (HSG65), this management system is an international standard for H&S at Work and provides a comprehensive framework for managing Occupational H&S that far exceeds the minimum legal standard.

As well as Safe Contractor, we also hold accreditations with Avetta SSIP, Acclaim SSIP as well as Constructionline Gold membership.

<sup>4</sup> Safety Schemes in Procurement

<sup>5</sup> PAS 91 seeks to help construction clients find and identify suitably qualified contractors that have demonstrated compliance with supply chain risk management practices

**FEEDBACK**

“Thank you for your attendance and incredible support, this event [the interview days] forms an important part of the school’s career plan and also is timed to coincide with the national initiative, ‘Careers Week.’ As such, the school placed real emphasis on preparation of students, to seek out and ask questions of as many organisations as possible. I think the majority of students did do this and it was remarked by a number of teaching staff how pleased they were that the students were getting out of their ‘comfort zone’ and interacting with many of the visitors. There is no question that this is down to all of you. So much information was provided, and this will be an experience that many of the young people will use not just for their career aspirations, but for personal confidence too.” **Natalie Coleman, Education Business Partnership**

We offered our services in design and sign making to a school in Birmingham who had recently launched their new values system. Their children designed the artwork for the values, and when the final design had been chosen, it was transferred to us.

With the designs sent to us, we produced signage to be installed across the school grounds, advertising their new values at strategic touchpoints.

We also assisted in the production design for another Birmingham based school’s nativity play for Christmas 2023. We provided them with printed graphics which made up the background of the play. With school resources more strained than ever, we were happy to lend a helping hand at a time of joy.

**FARESHARE FAMILY FOOD BANK**

During December 2023, the team pulled together to contribute to a cause larger than us by collecting and donating a range of food and vital non-food items for the FareShare UK organisation. This was then redistributed to charities across the UK, including school breakfast clubs, senior’s lunch clubs, homeless shelters, and community cafes.

Every week FareShare UK provide enough food to create almost a million meals for vulnerable people, an admirable cause and incredible feat. We donated three 200 litre boxes worth of food and toiletries to the charity overall in the lead up to Christmas, which goes a long way to show just how generous our team members can be!

**CHILDREN IN NEED & COMIC RELIEF**

To do our part during the famous Children In Need and Comic Relief events, the team organised bake sales. With a mixture of store-bought and home-baked goods brought to the events, we were able to raise a collective total of £680 for charity in just these events alone.

**CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY**

A yearly tradition, the Blaze and Cygnia teams dawned their best Christmas jumpers during December in support of UNICEF. The money raised will help UNICEF provide humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide.

**COMMUNITY WORK**

We have spoken with local councils and intend to complete a series of litter-picking events.

**SCRAPSTORE**

Birmingham PlayCare Network’s (BPCN) Scrapstore supports the reuse of unwanted materials that have been donated by businesses and individuals across Birmingham. It also offers schools, out of school providers, community groups and individuals the opportunity to access a wide range of high quality materials, save money and promote the reuse of waste materials. We donate a multitude of materials to the Scrapstore throughout the year to support their efforts, and in just four months alone, we supplied the following:

- 153 vinyl offcuts at 1m
- Over 20 boards of foamex (various sizes)
- 5mm Smartex 80 at 1500mm x 500mm
- 20 tube cores
- 10 laminate offcuts at 1m
- And much more!



**Fund Raising Total for 2023:**

**Comic Relief £360**

**Children in Need £320**



# HEALTH AND SAFETY



## 2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

### TRAINING:

- 75% of all staff across the group received Manual Handling training
- 100% of employees received refresher fire marshal training
- 50% of staff completed refresher First Aid training
- Introduction of Citation H&S Support
- Introduced Atlas H&S/HR support portal to enhance compliance

## 2024 ACHIEVEMENTS / OBJECTIVES

- Complete the implementation of the Atlas H&S/HR portal
- Introduce an enhanced Accident/Incident reporting procedure
- Increase control on Health Surveillance across all aspects of the business
- Undertake a review of our H&S policy
- Increase communication and understanding on policies, procedures, and risk assessments with the introduction of digital signatures
- Complete overhaul of training requirements of office based and factory staff

### MANDATORY FOR ALL HEXCITE STAFF:

- Asbestos Awareness training
- H&S Awareness
- Basic Fire Safety
- Basic First Aid



Health & Safety is a key focus for us. We introduced a new H&S Coordinator, focusing primarily on improving Health and Safety culture across the group through employee engagement and changing mindsets on the purpose and priority of health and safety. We also enlisted the help of a third-party partner - Safety and Management Solutions Ltd (SAMS) – to conduct a full audit across sites.

Once this was completed, we finalised a full overhaul of our H&S policy in collaboration with SAMS, which included rigid processes for annual testing, training, and audits, beginning in October 2022. All factory staff received face fit training<sup>6</sup> and IOSH<sup>7</sup> training was given to five senior members of staff. This was rolled out to an additional seven staff during 2023.

A variety of H&S testing and audits were undertaken across our factories and office spaces at our Blaze Broadstairs and Birmingham sites, which included:

- Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) Testing is the process of thoroughly inspecting and evaluating a local exhaust ventilation system against the commissioning report's performance, industry standards, and HSE guidelines. It includes airflow and pressure measurements, as well as checks on the effectiveness of contamination exposure control. All actions from the audit have been completed to ensure we comply with industry regulations.

- Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) testing is the process of checking electrical appliances for safety through a series of visual inspections and electronic tests.
- Hand Arm Vibration (HAV) aims to find out which power tools or processes cause hand-arm vibration, understand which of our employees are at risk of overexposure to vibration, and to put in place mitigating actions to protect them.
- Overhauling of all production tools which can be defined as a process of general maintenance performed on a machine or other industrial equipment. The goal of overhauling is to keep the system in serviceable condition. Regular checks can prevent critical damage.

Hexcite is fully focused on creating workplaces that unequivocally protect the environment and the health and safety of our employees, our customers, and our supply partners. Due to regulation changes, this is an area that's constantly evolving, and one we will continue to refine over the next year and beyond.

## Highlights

- **1-2-1-sessions - 2023 saw a trial of departmental 'surgery' style 1-2-1 drop-in sessions. This proved so successful, we have extended this to all teams and departments in 2024**
- **Metalworking Fluid testing has been introduced to ensure no harmful contaminants could impact the workforce. This includes testing of lubricants in the metal working processes for bacteria**
- **Formal Health & Safety training has been rolled out to the entire workforce, with 50% completion so far. In 2024, we aim for all staff to have received some level of First Aid training and Fire Safety training**



<sup>6</sup> A face fit test is a procedure that ensures the Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) you use fits correctly to protect against hazards identified in a risk assessment.

<sup>7</sup> IOSH Working Safely is a course covering the essentials of health and safety in the workplace

# CYBERSECURITY



Each year that passes shows the importance of cyber security, with cybercrime costing the UK economy £30.5 billion last year-hitting 1.5 million businesses. Understandably, cybersecurity is an area of focus for us. To ensure our systems remain robust, we undertake audits, as well as variety of internal and external penetration tests. We also ensure that our IT Cyber Security Policy is regularly reviewed. Following on from a successful 2022, we have had 0 cyber security incidents or breaches in 2023.

All laptops are encrypted, require double-factor authentication, and have two layers of anti-spam and phishing protection. We have employed an external company to conduct training with all office staff and new starters, which includes 30 information security courses.

## DATA PROTECTION

We treat the privacy of our customers, suppliers, and website users very seriously and take appropriate security measures to safeguard privacy. We are committed to collecting and processing personal data fairly and transparently in keeping with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. At all times we safeguard personal data against unauthorised disclosure and take reasonable security measures to protect this information.

**0**  
 cyber security  
 incidents or  
 breaches in 2023!

## Highlights

- We completed and passed our ISO 9001 in April 2023
- We spent over £100,000 on H&S during 2023 working with our H&S partner Safety & Management Solutions (SAMS)



# HEXCITE

Working in partnership with



An intelligent approach to energy, waste & sustainability

Sustainable Advantage

Hersham Place Technology Park

Molesey Road

Hersham

Walton-on-Thames

Surrey

KT12 4RS

[info@sustainable-advantage.com](mailto:info@sustainable-advantage.com)

0203 544 2030