



Tech for Good

CSER Storybook 2023-24



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Welcome to our first CSER report.

Waterstons has always been a values driven organisation. We empower our people to help the communities where we work, and our clients, in whatever way they feel best. We've continuously supported STEM education in schools, in FE institutions and universities in the 30 years we've been in business. But we've never reflected on, or measured what we've done, as it's just part of who we are.

We feel now is the right time to share this with you; our clients, our partners, our future colleagues and our existing colleagues and demonstrate the impact and value that we think our business provides beyond the balance sheet.

By measuring what we're doing and understanding the impact that we have, we can start to build momentum to achieve greater things and inspire all our people to make this part of everyday business.

We're committed to:

- Driving down the digital divide. In this digital first world, we have a responsibility to make sure that tech is available to everyone, no matter their socio-economic background, age, ability, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation.
- Actively helping the communities in the regions where we are based.
- Looking at ways to become a more sustainable business through how we operate and the services that we provide to our clients.
- Promoting technology as a career of choice by demonstrating the huge breadth of opportunities and ensuring that they are available to all.
- Looking after the wellbeing of our colleagues to ensure they are thriving at work and are able to bring their true selves to work through a supportive and inclusive working environment.
- Supporting our clients with their own CSER initiatives.
- Finding innovative ways to use technology for good and working with clients and communities to help solve society's challenging issues.

Michael
Stirrup



Focus on our communities.

We've always been passionate about supporting our local communities and are involved in a wide range of different activities from volunteering at food-banks and mentoring young people who've faced big challenges, to working with larger organisations and using our skills to help them deliver services to those in need.



Associate Director and Innovation Lead.



As a business we are focused on delivering business improvements for our clients. It's really important to us that the work that we do has a positive impact.

We're working with North Star Housing Group and the University of York to write a paper on the ethics of putting environmental sensors into houses to predict the growth of problematic mould. There are sensors in a set of ten properties operated by North Star and interviews have been conducted with tenants to explain what will be happening and to get their feedback on how they feel about having this, potentially quite intrusive, technology in their houses. There are challenging ethical questions about monitoring and ultimately passing judgement on the way people live their lives.

Based on the work we have been doing with North Star several housing associations from the North West have asked us to help them create an 'ethical framework for innovation'. We've engaged the ethicists from York again to help us with this. The group want to have a set of standard ethics principles that they can use to assess broad innovation projects - whether, for example, they are installing devices in tenant's homes, training machine learning models on tenant data or asking tenants to perform simple home repairs themselves with the aid of virtual reality.

Knock Knock is an app prototype that we have developed to help people feel safer in their homes. The Knock Knock app can be used to validate the identity of a contractor, public sector worker or employee of any business that knocks on doors as part of their role. With Knock Knock:

- Tenants in social housing can be assured that a contractor that has come to fix their plumbing for their housing association.
- Residents everywhere can know for certain that the person reading their gas meter actually works for their gas supplier.
- Everyone can feel safer opening the door.



Alex Waterston



We love projects like this because they not only help our clients with interesting and challenging innovation projects but they also help to make people safer in the world. Projects like this give us the opportunity to have a much wider positive impact on the world.

Procurement Officer and Changing Futures Volunteer.



"I take part in the Independent Visitors scheme with Changing Futures NE. For the past 5 years, I've been paired with a young person. We go out once a month and do activities like bowling, the cinema, out for meals, etc. This means she's got an extra person to rely on and trust outside of the care system, and I've gained a little sister. It's also a fantastic way to show that there is huge potential for a better future and increased positive social and mental wellbeing."



"I was delighted to get involved with Smart Works Newcastle. They are a charity that helps support women getting back to work by providing them with quality workclothes and accessories they can use for interviews, or when they find employment, and gives them a confidence boost.

It's scary enough attending an interview or starting a new job but at least if they feel confident in how they are dressed that can have a huge impact on their overall confidence levels when navigating a new start and new beginnings!"



Sector Principal and Smart Works Volunteer.

Information Security Consultant and Bow Foodbank Volunteer.



Bow Foodbank is a local Tower Hamlets charity that operates two food banks, one in Bow and the other in Bethnal Green. They provide emergency food supplies to those who are in crisis due to financial difficulties.

We have been volunteering with them since June 2023. Since beginning our volunteering, 16 different people from Waterstons have volunteered with them and in total we have given over 78 hours of voluntary help, and given a range of different donations - which has been a huge help to the charity.

"At the beginning of the first shift I did with them, I found it harrowing just how many people needed to access these services. But while the shifts can be hard work, they are an opportunity to chat and connect with some of the food bank's clients and other volunteers and see the difference that we're collectively able to make. Waterstons enabling and encouraging these opportunities means that we can continue to make a real impact to the local communities that we work in."

This year our team of volunteers working with Bow Foodbank have helped 6,963 people, packed and distributed 2,659 food parcels- a total of 13.2 metric tonnes of food which is the equivalent of 12 great white sharks or 29 polar bears!



Rhianne Short



People and Culture Partner and Food Bank Volunteer.



We have a team of volunteers who do shifts in the kitchen, prepping food and clearing tables down, washing up and making sandwiches. We also help make up parcels with food, toiletries and even pet food that can be distributed to those in need. We also help organise the shelves with the donated supermarket goods to make stuff easy to find and group items together.



Aman looks after our relationship with The People's Kitchen who provide food, friendship and support to people and families in need. They provide over 250 meals a day, 365 days a year, as well as warm clothing, sleeping bags and toiletries and other essentials.



Aman Kaur

"This is so important to me as I know that since Covid and the cost of living crisis, the number of people needing support from food banks and soup kitchens has grown exponentially and I really wanted to be able to help out in some small way.

I think it's easy to get caught up in our own lives and we can be ignorant to the problems being faced by others. Sometimes it's just easier to ignore the painful truths rather than face them, but I want to see the world from a different perspective, educate myself and do whatever I can to help.

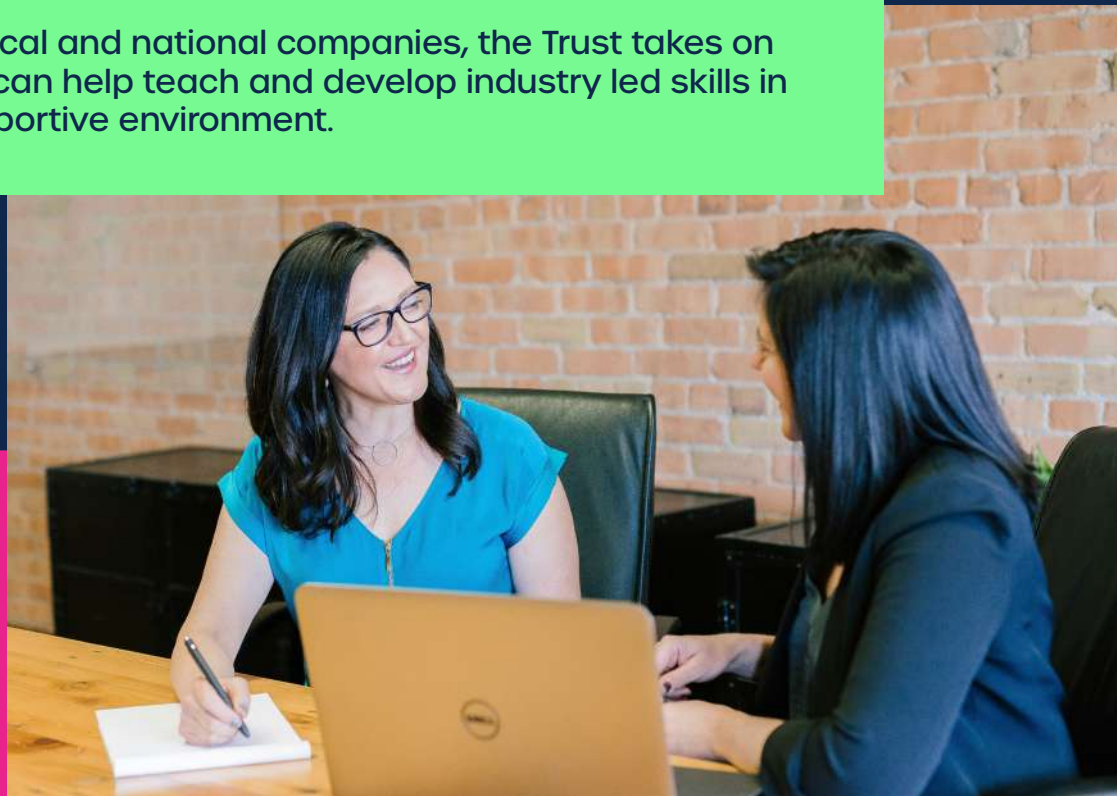
It's also amazing to think that by talking about the work we've done there we've had other people from Waterstons want to get involved so our small contribution can snowball into creating a bigger impact. It's the first time I've done something like this and it makes me appreciate what I have, and gives me an option to pay it forward.

We're looking forward to continuing our relationship with People's Kitchen and getting more new Waterstons volunteers on board!"

Director and Employability Trust Volunteer.

The Employability Trust based in Durham provides the long term unemployed with opportunities to develop industry skills, people skills and practical experience to improve their job prospects.

Working with local and national companies, the Trust takes on contracts that can help teach and develop industry led skills in a safe and supportive environment.



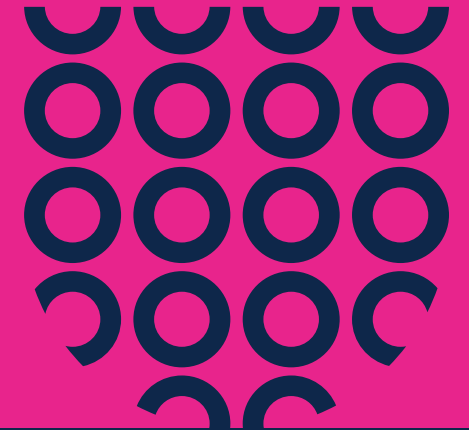
Sally Waterston, our founder, has been involved with the Trust since 2014 and became a non-executive chair of the organisation in 2016.

Her role is to ensure that the Trust holds true to their values and purpose and that each contract ties into that purpose.



"It's so joyous to go onto the shop floor and meet the fantastic people working for the Trust. It's such a happy environment and I'm blown away by the kindness of everyone who works with and for the Trust."

Hearing the individual stories of people the Trust have helped is truly humbling and I feel so grateful to have played the tiniest of parts in helping people develop the skills they need to rebuild their lives, their independence and reach their potential."



CEO and Edberts House Treasurer.

Edberts House, a vibrant community charity based in Gateshead in the North East of England.

Edberts House care about connection – connecting people to one another, connecting people to good support, and connecting people to decision makers. They believe wellbeing is not based on an ability to be independent but an ability to live with healthy interdependence. Creating connectedness is therefore at the heart of all the projects they develop.

Their Community Linking Project (social prescribing) began in 2013 and now covers 25 surgeries across Gateshead. Supporting patients who are struggling with the wider determinants of health: housing, money, debt, relationships, domestic violence, social isolation and lack of purpose, they ‘walk shoulder to shoulder’ with patients, advocating for them and accompanying them to activities and services that support their needs.



"I have acted as Treasurer on their Board of Trustees for a number of years, providing support from a financial and governance perspective to the organisation. Working with the charity allows me to contribute to society and give something back, but also allows me to learn from a diverse range of people and experiences that I wouldn't be exposed to in my day job at Waterstons."

"A person-centred approach underpins all that we do. Support is provided from a dedicated staff team who work in partnership with local people and other organisations to meet the interests and needs of our community. Our work is guided by and shaped by a group of Trustees. These trustees are also volunteers and they bring a range of expertise from across various fields.

Michael joined our board toward the end of 2019 and has since taken on the post of our Treasurer. Michael makes a significant contribution to our work especially in strengthening our finance infrastructure. He is always generous with his time and his advice, and we have benefited from this and greatly appreciate his support"

Sarah Gorman – Business Manager, Edberts House



Business Systems Lead and Crossroads Director.



Founded in 1985, Crossroads South Ayrshire provides respite to carers.

Caring for loved ones can be a rewarding experience but it can also be stressful, financially draining, exhausting and lonely. Crossroads provides an 'at home' service to relieve carers and their families from the stress of caring for a person who needs constant supervision to give them some much needed rest, either on a one-off or on a regular basis.



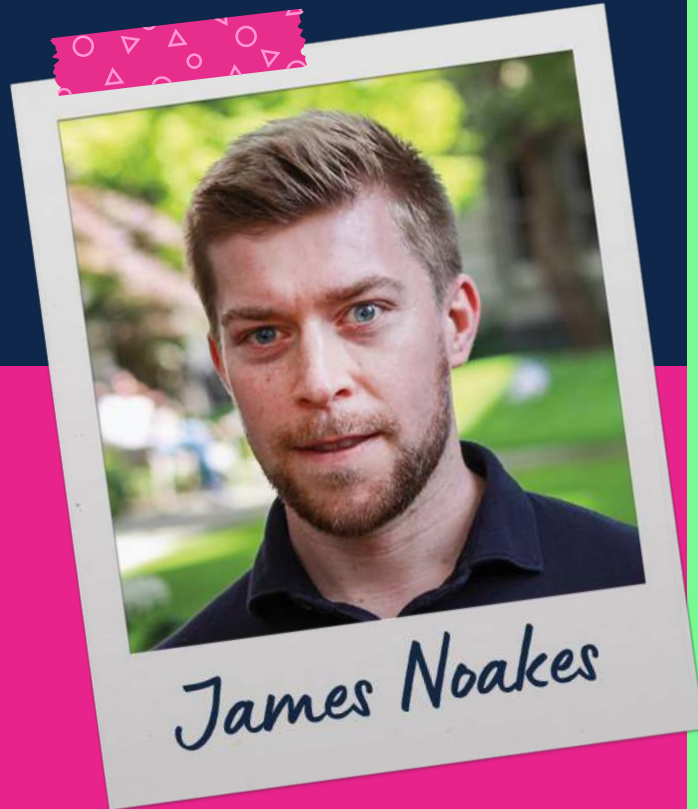
"Lora has assisted with a complete overhaul of our IT systems and infrastructure and the same with our website and internet profile. As a volunteer she has done all of this, and it has been a substantial piece of work. When she has faced an issue beyond her "ken" or available time, she has enlisted help from within the company who have all, willingly, assisted us in a timely and extremely helpful manner."

- Brian Kelsey Chairman Crossroads

"Carers give so much to their loved one but also indirectly support our health services. Having had to assume caring responsibilities at a young age, I understand the benefits of caring for someone but also the impact it has on you as an individual. Getting involved with Crossroads and helping with their IT & IT Strategy was a fantastic opportunity to support a charity close to my heart."



Service Management Lead and Scout Leader.



James Noakes

"I value volunteering as a Scout Leader greatly. It was a significant aspect of my childhood, and I remember how much I enjoyed and learned from it.

Volunteering allows me to pass on this chance to the next generation, and Waterstons flexible working has provided me with numerous opportunities to organise various adventurous programmes, ranging from bushcraft camps to hiking, without having to take any time off."

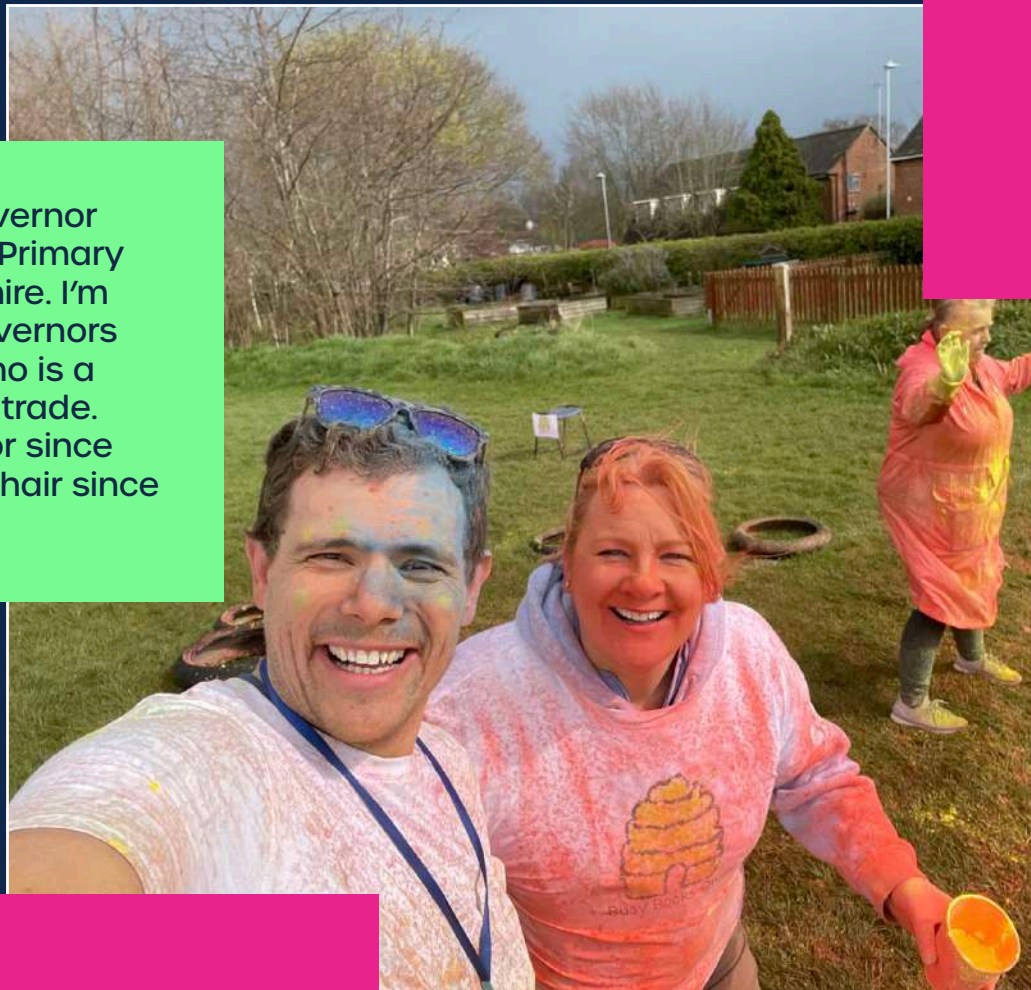
"I'm also a Duke of Edinburgh assessor and leader, so what we learn is primarily skill-based. Learning how to problem solve and take initiative is important for later life. It's lovely to see the young people transition, and it's interesting that even when they're all grown up, they still come down the pub and say hi from across the bar - of course, they're over 18!

It's an excellent way to unwind from the day-to-day but it also allows me to learn and acquire new skills. All of the leaders contribute to the effort in different ways and bring our professional abilities to the Scouts. Quite often, I can assist our group with our digital skills, while others provide different skill sets."



Client Experience Director and School Governor.

"I'm a Co-Opted Governor for Bowmansgreen Primary School in Hertfordshire. I'm also Co-Chair of Governors with a colleague who is a Property Lawyer by trade. I've been a Governor since July 2022, and Co-Chair since October 2023."



"Whilst I bring technology and business strategy from my corporate background, I also bring contract and commercial experience which helps the school run more efficiently and also helps to set a long term vision. My customer service and stakeholder management skills are also key when operating as a Co-Chair as I must also meet with a range of stakeholders including Parents, Local Authority representatives as well as Ofsted."



James Alderson

"I get a huge amount of satisfaction from being a Governor. It allows me to apply my work experience in a completely different setting. I've learned a huge amount, both about education, children and the challenges faced in society. It's often quite humbling and a way to ensure that future generations get the education they both need and deserve. Our communities are the life blood of our organisation and every organisation. Our clients come from these communities, as do our people. We're so grateful for their support and it's important we don't take this for granted."

I want to actively encourage people at all levels in Waterstons to get involved in volunteering, in any context. Obviously I'd love to see more school governors (as we're in short supply!) but volunteering is so rewarding and you can learn skills that you can put into practice in your day job. It's also given me a different perspective which I can bring to our business, including board meetings and interactions with clients."

Cyber Consultant and Community Cyber Advisor.



Cartrefi
Conwy

Creating Enterprise with Cartrefi Conwy invited us to a digital open day for the local community in Llandudno Wales.

It was attended by a wide selection of the community from the elderly, to parents and their children.

Each group was catered for by different stands in the community centre including North Wales Police, Vision Support, Telecare, E-Cymru and Waterstons. Participants were able to receive help and advice for their devices and had talks on how to stay secure online.

Children had story time from the local library with books featuring a staying safe online theme. It was a great event bringing the community and caring organisations together to help people utilise technology safely.



Kieran Fowler

Focus on education.

One of our key values is to support schools and educational establishments and open up technology as a career path to a diverse range of people. As we are becoming a digital first world, it's vital that we can demonstrate the value a career in tech can provide to everyone, including those who may not have previously considered that such a career was possible.



Software Consultant and School Governor.



The role of School Governor is a fascinating one. Most people have no idea it exists, and yet a school's governing body is mandated by the UK Government as a statutory requirement.

By law, it is the 'Instrument of government' for the school.

The closest analogy is that of a Board of Directors in a company: they're accountable for everything that happens, from educational standards, to safeguarding of pupils, provision for special educational needs, budgetary responsibility, salary reviews, appointing the headteacher, and lots more. Waterstons has several colleagues acting in this capacity. Andrew Buckingham talks about his role of Vice Chair of Governors at Polam Hall School, why it's important to him, and to the school.

"Governing bodies are staffed by volunteers who have skills very similar to my day-job of consulting: asking probing questions to people who are experts in their own field; being a "critical friend" and helping them spot opportunities for improvement. It's hard to find people who are actively honing those transferable skills in their work life, and yet still have time to apply them as a School Governor. In particular, I'm able to assist the school with its IT requirements and provision and I hope my passion for STEM inspires students to think about this as a potential career choice.

Educating the next generation needs companies like Waterstons; where employees are given the flexibility to work around schools' needs, enabling people to apply those crucial skills to school governance.

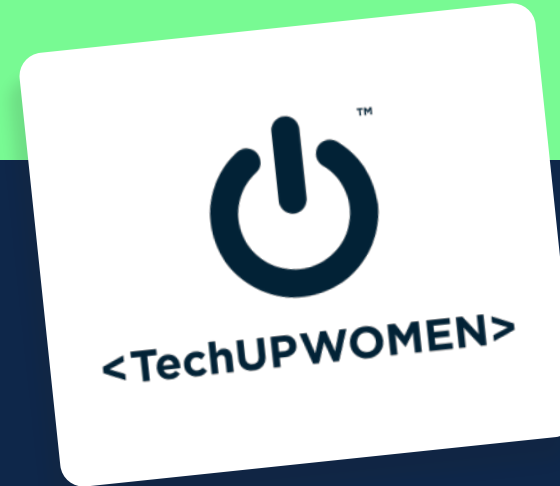
Without this commitment to CSR, our education system literally could not function. I'm hugely proud to be contributing to it."



Software Consultant and STEM ambassador.



Waterstons are continuing to support 2024's TechUP project at Durham University as an industry partner. The TechUP Women programme is for women and non-binary people in the North and North-East of England, run in conjunction with the Institute of Coding and Catch22 and is designed to provide learners with skills to start a new career in tech. Many of the learners who graduated from the programme last year have gone on to employment in digital/tech roles and/or further study – so the programme really does make a difference to people who would not otherwise have these opportunities available to them.



Laura Smith

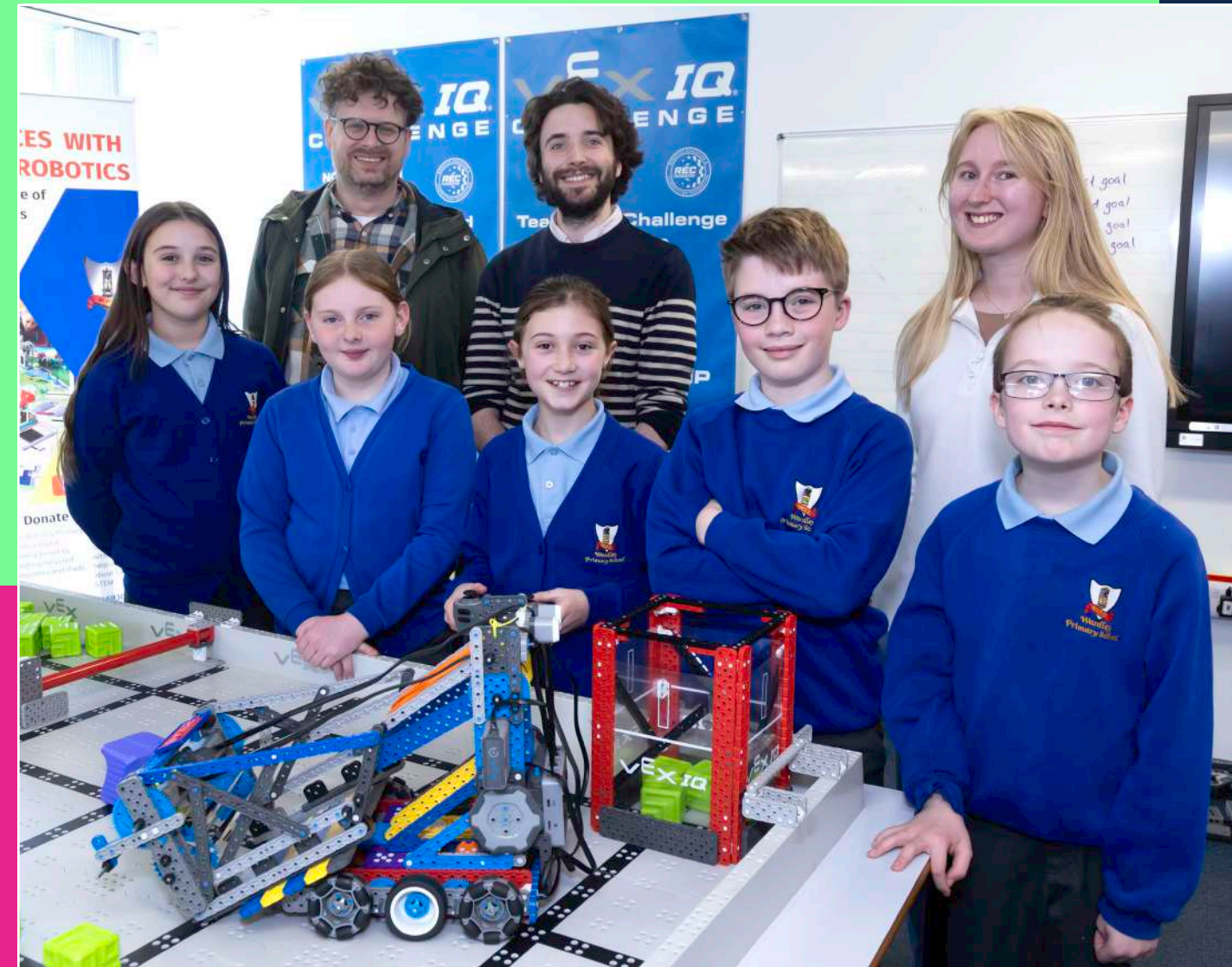
Innovation Consultant and STEM Supporter.

This year we were delighted to support Wardley Primary's VEX Robotics team. The team built an incredible VEX robot that could collect cubes spread out across an arena, filtering them into different sizes as it went and subsequently dropping them into raised bins in the fastest time possible.

After competing against hundreds of other schools from across the country and doing amazingly well the team was then invited, along with just three other UK schools, to the VEX Robotics World Championships in Dallas.



Wardley's team really held their own at the competition and won a Judge's Award for their collaboration, team work and determination. Before they went to the US, we had the opportunity to visit the school and see their robot. We were blown away by their creativity and teamwork and we are absolutely delighted to be supporting them.



Housing Sector Principal and Future Business Magnates Supporter.

For the past few years Waterstons have supported the Future Business Magnates competition, and this year we are once again supporting Belmont Community School.



"I have been supporting our brilliant team of children develop their ideas, attending workshops on assorted topics including developing a business case, innovation, marketing, and finances.

But I have not done this alone, I have also run a couple of sessions at the Durham office and in the school, with fantastic support from Waterstons colleagues including Alex Waterston, Andrew Buckels, Jenn Brown, Andrew Blance and Matt Steel (who created 3D print models of a fridge and camera).

The team have created a smart focus camera for fridges - The Fridge Focus, designed to reduce food waste by scanning the contents of the fridge to calculate the expiry date based on expected shelf life - the initial target demographic is those with physical and cognitive disabilities. The solution will be optimised with an App that suggests recipes based on what is in the fridge and its' shelf life/expiry date, which could help educate people on how to cook for themselves, reduce waste and save money."

This brilliant idea won the team second place at the FBM awards, a well-deserved achievement for the team and a journey we were proud to be a part of.

"Thank you for everything you have done for the team this year, you have been a brilliant business partner, and they couldn't have done it without you. I hope we get to work with you again"

- Mrs Latta, Belmont School



Lesley Buckels

Principal Security Consultant and STEM Ambassador.



CyberFirst is a National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) sponsored programme which presents opportunities to help young people explore their passion for tech by introducing them to the fast-paced world of cyber security.

The programme is designed to identify and nurture a diverse range of talented young people into a cyber security career. CyberFirst activities are intended to inspire and encourage students from all backgrounds to consider a career in cyber security and apply for a CyberFirst bursary. This is achieved through partnerships between local schools, the NCSC, which is a part of GCHQ, national and local companies and organisations who share the aim of encouraging young people to engage with computer science and the application of cyber security in everyday technology.



Focus on People.

One of our core values at Waterstons is 'People First' and looking after our colleagues is a key part of this.

We want our people to be able to bring their whole selves to work and sometimes we know that people have challenges in and beyond the workplace that can impact them. We try wherever we can to make the workplace inclusive and supportive. Our newly appointed wellbeing partner has devised a programme that supports our people with both in person and online events but also provides opportunities for self-help and learning across multiple areas including financial, mental health, physical and social wellbeing.



Improving diversity, equity and inclusion...

Waterstons is a business built on smart, creative, thoughtful people and we know that smart, creative, thoughtful people are everywhere. We want to create genuine opportunities for everyone. We want to remove barriers so we can make sure that people from all backgrounds have the space and opportunity to thrive in our business.

We're not doing this because it's good for business. We have no doubt that we will benefit from more diverse thinking, more inclusive ideas and a broader range of backgrounds and life experience but that's not our motivation. We're doing this because it's the right thing to do.




Of course we can always do more and we're committed to doing better. We want to be a diverse community where inclusion and appreciation are underpinned and exemplified by positive actions across all of our organisation.

Our 2023 recruitment drive has seen us trial new ways to reach potential future colleagues. These have included targeting specific job boards aimed at diverse audiences such as female identifying boards, anonymous cvs; where personal identifying information is not included in initial cv reviews, and also the inclusion of hiring champions in interviews to ensure we are looking for a cultural and values fit, not just technical ability. These new processes are starting to have an impact which we hope will feed through to the make-up of our organisation.

We have a DEI steering group with a board sponsor who meet regularly to ensure that diversity is on the agenda across the business. Looking at some statistics we have gathered this year we have seen an increase in the number of people who choose to actively disclose their personal circumstances which we believe is an indicator of how people are more comfortable sharing this within the business.

This year we have added new ERGs (Employee Resource Groups) for Pride, Menopause and Neurodiversity. 2025 will see the setup of a new cancer support group to provide a safe space for our colleagues who may be living with or supporting those with potentially life limiting health conditions.



2024 saw us produce our first Gender Pay gap report which is now available on our website. Whilst we continue to push for gender diversity within our business, we were pleased by the results which are above industry standards. We still have work to do but an action plan is in place to help tackle diversity issues.

Focus on Environment.

As a business we understand our commitment to do business responsibly and that means taking care of our planet as well as our people, clients and communities.

A re-calculation of our carbon footprint in 2024 following the return of our business practices and services to pre-pandemic levels, in addition to a period of growth, has given us some key priorities to focus on through the establishment of our Green Team.



Our footprint.

2024 saw us recalculate our carbon footprint across all our offices given that our last one was completed during Covid.

Scope 1

26,477 kgCO₂e

Scope 2

23,456 kgCO₂e

Scope 3 (upstream)

800,091 kgCO₂e

Scope 3 (downstream)

0 kgCO₂e

Total Emissions

850.24 tCO₂e

Due to the nature of our business you can see that the largest proportion of our carbon is in Scope 3. The full report is available to view on our website.

In our carbon reduction statement, we have set up a newly formed 'Green Team' - a global initiative to help us find ways to reduce carbon usage within each of our offices.

We are launching a targeted campaign to understand carbon emissions in our supply chain, so we can find ways to understand the data better and work with our suppliers to reduce our carbon usage where possible.

We're also looking at how our services could help our clients make informed purchasing decisions around technical solutions according to their carbon footprint and how we can support clients with their own net-zero journeys.



Litter picking!

This year saw the start of our litter picking in Durham and a beach clean for our London office!



Tree planting!

We held a tree planting day with Make It Wild our chosen environmental partners.

We celebrated significant client anniversaries by planting trees in North Yorkshire to create diverse woodlands.

Not only was this a wonderful way to spend time in the outdoors with our brilliant clients, but the trees that we have planted are a fantastic way to bring about a huge increase in biodiversity!



Focus on Fundraising & Sponsorship.

We're really keen to help support our colleagues with awareness, sponsorship and fundraising for causes close to their hearts.

This year we have raised over £500 for Breast Cancer Now with a 'wear it pink' day and bake sale across all our UK offices.



Lumiere Light Festival



In 2023, we supported Lumiere for the 5th time. From 16-19th November Lumiere illuminated the city of Durham and Bishop Auckland with light artworks by North East, UK and International artists. The event brought £3.86m into the local economy with 176,000 visitors viewing 40 artworks from artists from 15 countries.

The project also engaged 1,800 community participants, 8 young trainees, 3 prisons, 18 community groups, 15 schools and colleges and 6 libraries.



Business Beats Cancer

Waterstons contribute to the Business Beats Cancer North East (BBC NE) board with Helen Fawcett, Sector Principal – Manufacturing taking an active role.

The BBC NE board brings together business people from the North East to support the fight against cancer. They help raise money to support the work of the Newcastle Centre for Cancer Research, with all funds raised staying in the region. Helen sits on the board and contributes to the fundraising efforts across the region. This year the BBC NE board put on a record breaking gala dinner, participated in individual fundraising events and supported a number of individual donors to contribute. In the last year they have together raised £95,000.



Christmas Card Appeal

Each year we send an e-card to our clients asking them to vote for a charity picked by our colleagues where we will make a donation. This year we were really pleased to be able to donate £5k to Guide Dogs UK and Richmond Fellowship – who are a mental health recovery charity.



"The donation of £2,250 can help Guide Dogs provide 140 'puppy in training' jackets to support the very start of a guide dogs journey to become a future life changer."

Sharne Kirkwood
Guide Dogs



In this, our 30th year...

As part of our 30th birthday celebrations we have pledged to raise £30k for 4 chosen charities.

These charities won an office vote at each of our UK office locations. Throughout the course of our anniversary year we have teams of colleagues from around the business taking part in a series of challenges, from walking 30k in a day to climbing the 3 peaks in 24 hours plus summiting Snowdon at sunrise.

This activity will also be interspersed with bake sales and individual people challenges to help us raise funds for these important causes.



This year we have...

- Donated £16,500 to several different charities. This excludes an additional £30,000 we have pledged to raise, commemorating our 30th year in business.
- Supported the community with 550 hours of volunteering.
- Spent 1,250 hours supporting education and STEM activities.

Our volunteering time equates to one day per year per colleague, with an approximate total value of £220k.



At Waterstons, values are at the heart of everything we do. For over 30 years, we've empowered our people to support the communities in which we work, creating meaningful change in ways that matter. From championing STEM education in schools and universities to fostering innovation and growth in the businesses we serve, our commitment to making a positive impact goes far beyond the bottom line.

This is our first small step in measuring and sharing that impact. In this report, we reflect on the events and initiatives that help define who we are and what we stand for. We explore the difference we're making in the communities we touch, but with the knowledge that there is so much more to do.

We aim to inspire our people, our clients, and our partners to see the potential for business to be a force for good. This isn't just a report – it's a call to action. A reminder that success isn't only defined by profits, but by the positive changes we can create together.

Join us on our journey to make a lasting, meaningful difference.

Thank you for reading!

If you'd like any further information on Waterstons and our CSER activities, please contact:

Alison Dent, CSER Lead
alison.dent@waterstons.com

