



# RATHFINNY

SUSTAINABILITY AT RATHFINNY  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2021/22



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Rathfinny has always had sustainability at the forefront of what we do, from building a water re-cycling plant and using the flint from our land in our buildings, but we wanted to go further. We started on the BCorp journey, to be part of a new kind of business that balances purpose and profit, where we are legally required to consider the impact of our decisions on our workers, customers, suppliers, community and the environment.

Working as a small team from all areas of the business, we've spent the last 2 years getting to grips with carbon counting, composting and exploring with all employees what it means to us, both as a business and as individuals.

This report sets out what we've done and lays out our goals for the future.

*Sarah Driver, Cameron Roucher, Stan Brazil, Roger Bacon, Richard James,  
Tony Milanowski, Georgia Mallinson and Adrian Lamb.*

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## THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

The first step we took was changing our Articles of Association, putting a legal obligation on us as a company to take account not just of our profits and economic mission, but also to consider our environmental and social impact, and take account of all our stakeholders. This embeds into our DNA these responsibilities and ensures that these goals remain front and foremost over time.

## A NEW MISSION STATEMENT

We worked as a team to come up with a new mission statement, reflecting our true intentions. It took quite a bit of time, but here's what we came up with . . . . We're especially proud of the focus on the word 'kind', which is something of value to all of us.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO PRODUCING EXCEPTIONAL WINES AND EXPERIENCES, ENJOYED THE WORLD OVER, THAT REVEAL THE CHARACTER OF OUR FAMILY ESTATE IN SUSSEX, USING METHODS THAT ARE KIND TO OUR LAND, PEOPLE, COMMUNITY AND WIDER ENVIRONMENT.

## HANDBOOK

We've worked hard to produce a Staff Handbook that reflects who we are as a business, that as well as including a lot of new policies (environmental, procurement, menopause, breast-feeding at work, interns) also sets out the way we work and behave – our Code of Ethics if you like.

We wanted to be transparent about our staff, all of whom we rely on for the success of our business. We wanted our Core Casuals, those who come regularly to help us in busy times – over pruning and picking, but also throughout the year - and our Seasonal workers who come in at harvest and in the summer, to feel as much a part of the 'Rathfinny Family' as our Core Team. We wanted transparency over the different benefits people are entitled to and why.

## STAFF TRAINING AND ENGAGEMENT

It takes time to embed a new culture and we've worked hard to bring our staff along with us by

- training them on what it means to be a BCorp and how to incorporate thinking about how all the decisions we take, big and small, have a social and environmental impact
- looking at the [UN Sustainable Goals](#) and how they apply to us at Rathfinny. They can look like lofty and unachievable goals, but broken down, we can all make a difference



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E.g Ensure responsible consumption and production

By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources

- We've asked staff for their ideas and feedback, which we've recorded and are working through
- We've asked everyone, as team members and individuals, to set goals, again big or small, that they will try to achieve over the next year, be it reducing the carbon footprint in the Winery or stopping using plastic water bottles in everyday life.

*Day to day ideas for living more sustainably*

## STAKEHOLDERS

We've spent time identifying all our stakeholders, and there's a long list! We pride ourselves on our engagement generally with our community, the wine world, environmental and educational organisations, and others, but we recognise that we can always do better. For a start we're telling them about our commitment and journey and asking them what they too are doing.

Suppliers – we've developed a new procurement policy that asks questions of them, what they are doing to make a difference, and questions of us when we're considering ordering something new. It's not a bad guide for all of us when we're thinking of buying something new!

## QUESTIONS WE ASK OURSELVES

1. Can an existing product be repaired or refurbished?



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2. Can an existing product be modified?
3. Can this product be hired or borrowed?
4. Can this product be shared within Rathfinny?
5. Can this product be purchase second hand or refurbished or renewed?
6. Where does this product, including key components and raw materials, come from originally?
7. Does this country cause concern for environment or human rights?
8. What impact does using this product have on the environment?
9. Consider: Energy, water, emissions, wastewater, solid waste, noise, local environment
10. How long will this product last?
11. What will happen to it after its use?

## STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

Staff – as well as asking for their input, we’re reviewing previous surveys and setting new ones.

Trade surveys – we’ve carried out an in-depth survey of our trade customers to find out how we’re really doing and how we can do better

## Governance Goals

- Ensure monitoring of decisions taken to ensure social and environmental issues are taken account of at every level
- Engage more with our stakeholders and ‘spotlight’ their green initiatives, to learn from others
- Ensure all staff, including Directors, have at least annual instruction on behavioural expectations, bribery and corruption
- Ensure all relevant internal and external stakeholders have annual communication of anti-corruption system
- Handbook - Ensure identified changes that are made through the year are included in the Handbook and reported to staff



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## ENVIRONMENT

### CARBON FOOTPRINT

We measured our carbon footprint in line with the highest international standards with the help of [Carbon Jacked](#). We're a complex business when you think about it – we have a Vineyard, which is agricultural, a Winery and Production side, so we 'manufacture'. Then there's our Hospitality business, with two restaurants and accommodation, as well as tours and experiences, and finally, we have a whole administrative side with marketing, accounts, and sales. We also work locally in Sussex, but increasingly across the country and now we're in 7 international markets too!

### BASIS OF OUR STANDARDS

Carbon Jacked have used some of the most robust standards for our carbon accounting, namely the [Greenhouse Gas Protocol](#). Within this they have used the Corporate Standard, and the Corporate Value Chain Standard, which measure the business rather than just a product. Even though the vineyard and all its 385,000 vines and 7,000 trees that we've planted sequester carbon as does the soil, this isn't counted in these standards as it is in some less stringent calculations. If taken into account, we have calculated that our operations would have off set over 470 tonnes of Carbon, more than all our Scope 1 and 2 emissions!

#### *Grappling with the day-to-day!*

*As well as considering the big issues, we've spent time discussing the practicalities. What do you do when making environmental decisions that cost more? Eg tape for packaging £1.20 vs £3? For a business that has still to break even, this is a very real factor. We decided to take a practical approach, if it's a small difference and manageable within the budget, we do it, like the loo roll and the tape above. If it's a bigger expense, we discuss it and decide together whether to go for it – like the composter.*



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## WHAT WE'VE DONE ACROSS THE ESTATE

- Cut down on printed material, for example using digital contracts and docusign, rather than paper ones, and with our customers, directing people to the website for information.
- We've encouraged more use of trains and public transport, car-sharing and put in 2 electric vehicle (EV) points on the Estate with help from the Brighton Energy Cooperative (BEC), already saving 191kg of carbon since they were installed! The charging point is operated by Pod Point. As part of our Bcorp aspirations we chose to work with BEC as they work to promote renewable solar energy locally, making a small margin above the cost of the electricity which they use to cover the cost of the pod point, help fund future renewable energy projects as well as distributing funds to their members and into their community fund.
- Reviewed our electrical suppliers and investigated alternatives. Again, we're working with BEC to get more solar panels and we're working with their sister organization Brighton and Hove Energy Services Cooperative (BHESCO) to look at a community application for a wind turbine that will not only help the environment, but benefit our local community. It will be a huge undertaking for everyone involved, but the question we ask ourselves is "if not now, then when?" We are especially proud that every member of the management team is prepared to support this initiative as we all think it is the right thing to do.
- Travel – lock-down meant we cut down on travel and had to make better use of online means of engaging with our staff and customers, and this is something we are keen to continue, whilst still maintaining close personal relationships.
- We've engaged a new waste collection service, Paper Round, who commit that
  - o NOTHING goes to land fill
  - o Food waste, if any, will be converted to biogas and biofertilizer
  - o They can provide staff training on recycling
  - o They are investing in electric vehicles
  - o They provide detailed reporting on what waste we are producing, broken down by materials
  - o They can collect other items like batteries, coffee pods, printer cartridge and others
  - o They can remove hazardous waste and PPE





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It's worth noting from the list below, how much of this work is working with others in our community, an important factor in everything we try to do.

- Left the grass and interrow to grow longer and planted cover crops to encourage beneficial insects and reduce fuel use. One unexpected consequence of this has been more insect bites and trouble with ticks for the vineyard team! It also increases the organic matter we can add back into the soil, by letting the grass grow longer it takes longer to break down when it is mown in basic terms making a mulch that breaks down over time
- We have purchased an under-vine weeder to help decrease our use of herbicides, again looking after the health of our soil
- Composted marc to reuse in the vineyard to reduce fertiliser use
- Completed biodiversity assessment of the site in conjunction with Buglife
- Working with the South Downs National Park as part of the Changing Chalk project to restore natural chalk downland on our North facing scrubby banks
- Working with Buglife as part of another Changing Chalk project. Sustainable Vines and Landscapes for Wild Pollinators, to encourage pollinators into vineyards
- The Estate is within the National Park (and we work very closely with them) and we are also part of the current Environment Stewardship Scheme (from a farming and chalk grassland viewpoint)
- We are using the most fuel-efficient tractors in their class and have investigated the use of electric versions.
- We try wherever possible to complete 2 jobs in one pass to conserve fuel
- Working with South East Water to monitor water quality and how different farming affects the groundwater
- Have introduced beehives in conjunction with a local beekeeper
- Planted over 7,000 trees





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- Developed habitats to increase biodiversity in both the vineyard and surrounding farm area
  - Use organic certified seaweed extract from a UK source to further reduce reliance on chemical fertilisers.
  - Chemical container waste is recycled with an approved facility
  - We are also part of the Eastern South Downs Facilitation Group which has the following environmental priorities:
    - Historic environment
    - Nature recovery
    - Water quality
    - Soil health
- As part of this we are part of the farm carbon project benchmarking and improving soils.

## Vineyard Goals

Our goals in the vineyard are all about making changes for the long-term benefit of the land and vines. Often it takes years for some things to be noticeable or have an effect, so this is a gradual process where we are making small tweaks for long term gain.

Mid term – next 5 years - moving our non-vineyard land into Countryside stewardship for next 5 years giving us a chance to decide what we want without it being set in stone while keeping the land in production (but less intensive than strict arable production). We have a plan that encourages birds, bees, and pollinators, giving all year-round interest and will provide a lot more diverse plantings across the estate





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## **Biodiversity Monitoring at Rathfinny**

- *We worked with Alice Parfit from Buglife, who conducted a biodiversity survey in four areas with different ecosystem characteristics across the Estate. We'll look to repeat this every couple of years and monitor changes. This initial survey has shown the broad breadth of species within the Vineyard and on our chalk grassland bank as well. We all note the bumblebees and Buglife's work has opened our eyes to the many species of hoverflies, solitary bees, and predatory wasps we have thriving here.*
- *With interest of educating our own staff on biodiversity surveying, one member of staff attended a BioBlitz survey with Graeme Lyons, a freelance entomologist, ecologist, and botanist.*
- *We have carried out Badger surveys and TB vaccinations on site, working with The Animal and Plant Health Agency. As part of this partnership, we have hosted regular training sessions and will continue to do so throughout the ongoing 5-year programme. We hope that this will aid our neighbours that graze livestock and provide an alternative to badger culling.*
- *With notable butterfly species such as Adonis Blue inhabiting chalk grassland on site, butterfly transects have been carried out on the bank by Bob Eade since the Vineyard was planted. This info is passed onto **Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre** and The Butterfly Conservation. Key butterfly species have been doing well where we sensitively manage our chalk grassland e.g. Silver Spotted Skipper, Adonis Blue and Green Hairstreak. A moth was found to be breeding for the first time in Sussex since the 1950s and a first sighting for a rare parasite to a moth larva was seen – a first for Sussex!*
- *Our Vineyard team keep a diary of species sightings, including when and where they were spotted. This includes hares, as well as other mammals, birds and plant species.*
- *Richard James has completed a survey using the same methodology as the BTO Breeding Birds in 2021 on the Estate. This can then be repeated to ascertain any species change. It was so positive to note we have breeding Tawny, Barn and Little owls on the Estate. Being near the top of the food chain this illustrates the depth of our biodiversity. Other notable species showing strongly within this survey were skylark and corn bunting – 2 notable mixed farmland birds that are declining nationally.*
- *Although not carried out by SDNPA in 2021, our advisor on Moths, Colin Carter, monitors populations using pheromone traps placed at two different sites within the Vineyard.*
- *Spotted wing drosophila (SWD) traps are also placed around the Vineyard, which we use to monitor numbers. This is an invasive species which poses a threat to soft fruits.*



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## WINE TOURISM

At Rathfinny we source all our ingredients based on their quality of flavour as well how they are produced or reared to high welfare standards. Creating relationships with the producers and working alongside them creating menus from what is in season is key to the philosophy of what we do.

- We work closely with [Namayasai Farm](#) in Lewes one of our main suppliers who are pioneers of the agroforestry method known as 'alley cropping' and the use of conservation biological control. Robin and Ikuko at Namayasai supply us with many of our vegetables, herbs and fruit.
- South Brockswell Farm is a small-scale farm 20 miles from Rathfinny and Sarah provides us with asparagus, goats and game from her family run farm
- Much of our lamb comes from the South Downs National Park with our lamb reared on [Saddlescombe Farm](#) by Rolly and Camilla
- Richard Vaughan from Huntsham Farm supplies us with amazing Middle White pork and beef
- Our butter is made by Helen a small producer who collects milk from high welfare dairies throughout Sussex to make her handmade butter

We have great relationships with all our suppliers respecting what it has taken to get the produce to us and serving it with the respect it deserves.





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*A special word on beef . . . . This came up as one of the highest contributors to our carbon count! 66% of our Scope 3 purchased good and services! Because of this we've started to use it less in our menus, but we've also committed to buying the whole animal and using all of it.*

*The current method of counting the carbon footprint of beef doesn't account for how it is grown; there are obviously poorly performing farms (such as feed lots that have cleared rainforest) and better ones like most UK farms are, open fields where cattle are free to graze on grass or forage. It proves that not all beef is equal.*

*Beef has nearly 4 times the carbon footprint of chicken, and that is predominantly due to how a lot of the world's meat is produced. It basically counts its emissions from the cattle in methane and not any of the carbon that, properly managed grass feed farming, removes from the atmosphere. While I'm not saying we shouldn't eat less meat, we probably should just remember, a field of vegetables is not anywhere close to mimicking nature, however herbivores grazing grasses is pretty close to what we would have seen thousands of years ago and as such better for the soil and long term, the environment, than intensively farmed vegetables that are depleting the soil ever would be.*

*Cameron.*





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## Other Initiatives

- We've installed a composter that takes up to 400 ltr a week of food waste, bio-degradable vegetation and some paper waste and up to 10 tonnes a year! It will make great compost that can then be used on the Estate and will obviously contribute to reducing our CO2 emissions
- We've replaced plastic UHT milk pots with small refillable milk bottles for our visitors, and paper sugar sachets with cubes – small initiatives that make a difference
- We reuse all plastic crates we get deliveries in for storing produce and prepped food
- We're reusing woolchill sent with frozen products, where possible, or send it back to be recycled
- We're recycling our corks through Recorked
- We've changed to 'Who Gives a Crap' loo paper across the Estate that, as well as using bamboo or recycled toilet paper, also donates 50% of their profits to providing toilets to the underprivileged around the world. We did this anticipating higher costs but for some reason we're using less paper than we did before, and it's come out cheaper
- Fruit bowl provided for chefs and FOH staff in hospitality – with irregular breaks and time pressure ensuring there is a healthy snack option available is important during busy times

## Wine Tourism Goals

- Move to using refillable cleaning products to buy larger format wherever possible
- Look at a local source for toiletries that are refillable rather than disposable across the Estate
- Increase items used for composting as becomes established
- Reuse of unused bottled water from bedrooms – storing and using on the plants inside and outside in marquee and the courtyard garden in the summertime.
- Changing of all bulbs to LED where possible and some areas timed, like the lounge.
- Hot water timing of boilers monitored at FB.
- Recycling bins back of house in wine tourism areas.
- Solar PIR lights in rear car park, staff car park and up the hill where non-residents park
- Installing timers on lighting





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## Packaging

- With approximately 1/3 of our wines being sold on the Estate (Flint Barns, Tasting Room and Cellar Door), we have cut down on cardboard waste by carefully reusing our 6 cases for as long as possible.
- Eliminated polypropylene strapping on pallets shipped domestically
- E Comm packaging eliminated all plastic including tape
- Following a thorough investigation into our use of plastics, we have adopted an 80% recycled and fully recyclable pallet wrap for all our domestic and export shipments sourced from [Rajapack](#)
- We've radically redesigned our cardboard 6 cases which means we are using 25% less cardboard material and allowing us to fit 40% more bottles on a pallet, thereby cutting down on the transportation footprint. Finally, the new design is more robust, so ensures that our customers receive the wine without breakage

## Corks

Rathfinny is using Mytik Diam, a high-tech type of cork, which provides the highest quality sparkling wine closure while minimising waste and losses associated with other types of seals. Additionally, a 2018 study by PricewaterhouseCoopers stated that corks were the most environmentally friendly form of wine closure with Europe's cork oak forests being a haven for biodiversity and sustainable agriculture.





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## Waste

The wine production team is reducing the amount of waste generated by the Winery which is going to landfill. Currently any waste generated by the bottling and disgorging process such as caps, bidules, cardboard and plastic film is collected, sorted and stored. Depending on what the waste product is, it can then be re-purposed or recycled instead of going to landfill.

## Winery Goals

- Further improve energy efficiency in the winery and directly reduce the carbon footprint of our electricity emissions
- Audit and improve our water usage within the winery
- Whilst we have invested in a wastewater treatment facility, we are looking to invest in new technologies to reduce the amount of wastewater we generate
- Investigate more sustainable options for gifting with our retail and trade partners and reduce the need for gift boxes which are difficult to recycle
- Upgrade our refrigeration system and reduce the risk of greenhouse gases emission associated with the refrigerants used
- Redesign our Cradle Valley wine range to look at reducing the amount of glass, paper and plastic we use with this wine
- Spreading the word with our visitors and customers about BCorp and the steps we are taking to be environmentally and socially responsible
- Many of the initiatives detailed above involve working and supporting others in our community
- We work closely with local schools on work placements to illustrate the diversity of our work from agronomy to chemistry, and attended local career fair, with over 200 students, promoting the wine industry and hospitality as excellent career paths
- Cameron Roucher, our Vineyard Manager, works with HM Coastguards as a volunteer Coastguard Rescue Officer
- We collaborate with Plumpton College providing our expertise via guest lectures and providing their students for options academic projects and on-site experience
- We've signed up to
  - Race to Zero pledging to have net zero carbon emissions by 2050, if not before.
  - The Porto Protocol an international foundation fostering climate solutions for the wine industry
  - Get Nature Positive as a founding member



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## Community Goals

- To organize a round table with other Sussex Vineyards to discuss how we can collaborate and support each other on this journey of sustainability
- Improve community engagement with wildlife on the Estate including the provision of bio-diversity tours
- Diversity and Inclusion – we want to learn more about this, and how we can be more diverse and inclusive. The plan is to set up a group with staff from all areas of the business. So far, we have ideas around undertaking training to understand the issues better
- We are accessible as a site and we want to make more of this including dedicated tours for blind and deaf people. Considering which areas of the trail are accessible
- Talking to local charities that work with disabled people
- Apprenticeships – we have looked at these and will continue to.
- Formalise our charitable approach – we give a lot to various charities every year, but now we are going to ask staff to propose charities they value, and as a company, we will choose 3 every year to support



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We regard our staff as our most valuable asset, so we're always looking at ways to improve their experience of working at Rathfinny.

So far this year we've:

- Reviewed the staff policies, added new ones, and created a Staff Handbook that hopefully binds us in our mission
- Reviewed all training on offer at Rathfinny and encouraged staff to think about their career paths and how we can help them to progress, be it with core training on skills they require for their roles, or cross-training and general life skills
- Improved our communication across the business bearing in mind that we work in different areas on site, nationally and internationally, and on different days and at different times. We've put in suggestion boxes and noticeboards across the Estate, as well as getting all staff on Teams, though getting them all to post pictures of themselves is harder to achieve
- Reminded staff of all the support available, through company initiatives and industry charities, including for health issues, mental health advice, financial support
- Carried out training on BCorp and listened to ideas they have on ways to improve our sustainable approach, as well as general ideas they have about the business





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## Workers Goals

- Overall, the aim this year is to embed BCorp issues that have arisen during our application programme to include improving upon staff career development and training and review staff benefits
- Continue to improve the induction process across the Estate so that all staff feel welcomed, understand the key policies, know who people are generally across the Estate and particularly in their own area, and understand their own departments
- Ensure all training – core-based, cross-training, life skills, in-house and external are recorded centrally as a base line for future years and to ensure all staff have appropriate career paths
- To reinstate our 10% pension policy contribution that for one year only, over the pandemic, was reduced to 3%, reflecting the uncertainty in our business at the time
- Review staff benefits, old and new, with a view to providing a better working environment for all staff
- Create a monthly newsletter that includes Team Meeting minutes as well as social events, book reviews etc with the aim of engaging all our staff across the Estate
- To encourage staff members to become Bcorp champions and support new and existing staff in engaging in the process
- To establish a Diversity and Inclusion group
- Create an annual calendar to ensure all staff can meet each other over the year and in different circumstances, to include social events, wine tasting, coffee, tea and lunch opportunities and life skills training
- Establish Rathfinny Academy with the aim of having identified levels of training across every area of the business that staff, old and new, can be ‘awarded’ certificates for, and work towards higher levels of attainment if wanted