

# ANNUAL SUSTAINABILITY REPORT



2022



A L E X B E G G

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WEAVERS OF LUXURY ACCESSORIES SINCE 1866



# OUR TEAM

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# FOREWARD FROM THE CEO

With our purpose being Making a Material Difference, we celebrate the progress we made last year whilst at the same time acknowledging that businesses such as our need to do more. Creating beautiful products is at the heart of what we do, and the opening of our store in Burlington Arcade provided an inspiring showcase for the variety & quality of products we create.

In addition to making exquisite products, how we operate as a business really matters to us and this report touches on some of the areas in which we make a material difference beyond the products we produce.

We made good steps regarding further developing traceability of our materials through our supply chain. We have continued with our CapraCare programme for the sourcing of cashmere, buying only from pasture user groups who have good standards of farming practice in areas where pastureland is being managed well. Another highlight has been the launch of our first product with digital labelling traceability through a Begg x Co collaboration with COS.

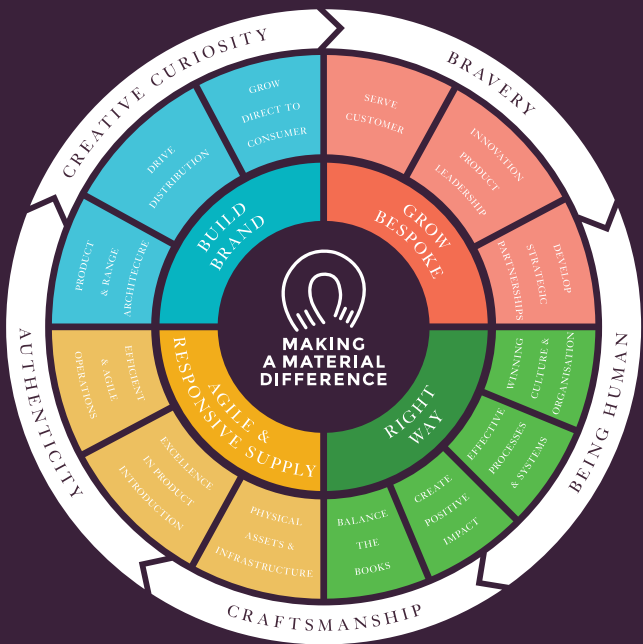
As a partner of Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA) we are supportive of the increased scope and introduction of certification that will support the shift that needs to happen through the supply chain from farming communities to consumer.

Within our production facilities, we are keen on the elimination of waste material, however, not all materials used in the manufacturing process are used in the final product. Considering this, we have been working with a number of partners to upcycle our waste instead of disposing of it to incineration, including piloting a new recycling process which makes new yarns from waste materials that we can turn into new products. From November 2022, both of our sites utilise 100% renewable electricity.

From a social perspective, we continued to support a charity in Mongolia, as well as local ones. We also celebrated our first eNPS (employee net promoter score) as +21.

And yet for all we acknowledge the progress being made, the importance of doing more is clear. Our focus will continue to be on the following:

- Making significant progress on pathway to carbon neutrality.
- Recognise that collaboration is essential to make more positive impacts.
- Establishing traceability of product through ethical and responsible supply chain.
- Increasing the proportion of products incorporating some element of circularity or regeneration.



Our values guide how we pursue our purpose, our focus and the actions that we take.

**Craftsmanship** - We are experts at what we do, applying high standards to our work, building on our legacy for future generations

**Authenticity** - We are true to ourselves and celebrate individual differences.

**Creative Curiosity** - We are open minded and continuously challenge, seeing each day as an opportunity to discover and create.

**Bravery** - We are ambitious and take action, embracing challenges with a courageous spirit

**Being Human** - We care for our colleagues, our communities, and our planet, supporting each other to make our unique contribution.

IAN LAIRD  
Chief Executive Officer

# LINDÉNGRUPPEN – A purpose-driven owner



Our owner, Lindéngruppen, is a second-generation family business focused on sustainable and long-term development of industrial companies. Lindéngruppen's purpose is to “**empower our companies to prosper and lead the transformation to a sustainable world**”.

The Group is unified by the belief that by being rooted in a clear purpose and long-term thinking, we are better able to build resilient and prosperous companies, while also making a difference and taking an active part in solving some of the major challenges facing our world.

Together we work actively to optimise benefits in terms of environmental and societal impact, and to minimise negative

impact. Each company is required to have a clear understanding of the issues that are most material and that how these can be influenced and over time transformed over time. Going forward, an important part of optimising benefits is to understand and drive the ability of our customers and our end-users to become more sustainable.

## A NEW MODEL FOR VALUE CREATION

In 2021, Lindéngruppen developed a new Value Creation Model that measures economic, environmental and social impacts in addition to financial result. The model recognises that we are interdependent on the environment and the societies in which we operate.

By factoring in some of the major costs and benefits that our businesses generate, we can give sustainability performance a similar weighting as financial performance.

sustainability-related risks and opportunities and not least, promote accountability and transparency.

The new model for value creation will allow us to make more informed and responsible business decisions and enable better prioritisation of resources. It will also create stakeholder value and support more meaningful dialogue, better understand

Our aim is to use the model to integrate overall value creation into the governance of the Group, our investment decisions, and even incentive structures in order to secure long-term growth and profitability. In 2022, we worked to forecast our value creation for 2023.





COMPANY INFORMATION

Alex Begg Group Limited produces scarves, knitwear and home furnishings for luxury brand customers across the world. We also manufacture product under our own brand, Begg x Co, which opened a retail store in the Burlington Arcade in 2022. We have two manufacturing sites, a weaving mill in Ayr and a knitting mill in Hawick. Both sites are certified to ISO 50001, and our site in Ayr is certified to ISO 14001 and ISO 9001. In 2022, we also submitted our application to become B Corp certified.

The company, wholly owned by Lindéngruppen AB, has its headquarters at 17 Viewfield Road, Ayr, Scotland KA8 8HJ. The Board, the highest governing body, is comprised of representatives of Lindéngruppen, members of the management team based in Ayr and an independent Chair & non-executive Directors with extensive relevant experience.. The Board meets four times a year and most of the decisions regarding day-today running of the business are made by the Ayr management team.

Sales for the year were £19.6m (2021—£15.3m), capitalisation was £12.5m (2021—£4.4m). The number of employees for both sites at the end of the reporting period was 223 FTE.

The main raw materials used at both Ayr and Hawick are specialist high-quality dyed yarns, sourced from spinners in the UK and Italy. The yarns produced by Tier 1 suppliers are comprised of animal fibre, primarily cashmere and wool. Traceability and quality are extremely important issues for us and much of our work with the supply chain is aimed at improving performance in these areas.

The company is a member of the Sustainable Fibre Alliance, UK Fashion & Textiles Scotland, and Sedex, and has subscribed to the Campaign for Wool. We have mapped our work against the UN Sustainable Development Goals and have identified those which have the most relevant impact to our operations and strategic plans. Additionally, we have made reference to the following on specific issues:

- the GRI Standards for reporting ([www.globalreporting.org](http://www.globalreporting.org))
- the Restricted Substance List issued by the ZDHC Foundation
- the Living Wage Foundation
- the Five Freedoms of animal welfare and associated Five Provisions
- the UN Sustainable Development Goals (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>)
- the Sustainable Cashmere Standard from the SFA

The company reports annually on its sustainability performance, the last report having been issued in May 2022. This current report covers the calendar year 2022 and has been prepared in accordance with the GRI Standards: Core option (published 2016). It has not been externally assured.

Alex Begg uses the Precautionary Principle in managing operations by taking a rigorous approach to managing risk. The company actively works with its suppliers to ensure the industry chemical compliance standards laid down by ZDHC are adhered to, as defined in our Policy on Hazardous Chemicals.

Our key stakeholders concerning operations, environmental management and health & safety are defined in our policies on these subjects.

In 2022, we made the following donations:

- In kind blanket donation to Festival of Kindness, worth £4,778
- In kind blankets, stoles and scarves to Ajuta un Om for Ukraine, worth £6,713
- €3,000 to Sentier D’Action
- £1,871 to smaller groups.

In addition to what we donated as a business, our employees also fundraised throughout the year, contributing:

- £1,740 to Cash for Kids from the Christmas raffle
- £8,588 to Whitely’s Retreat
- £470 for Goat Fell Climb
- £128.16 for the Christmas Jumper Day

There were no contributions to political parties, politicians, lobby or advocacy groups.

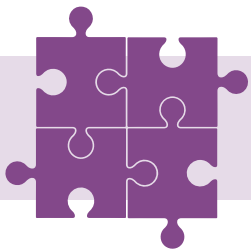
There were no whistleblowing incidents in 2022.

*Note: The GRI Standards are “the first global standards for sustainability reporting. They feature a modular, interrelated structure, and represent the global best practice for reporting on a range of economic, environmental, and social impacts”. We have*

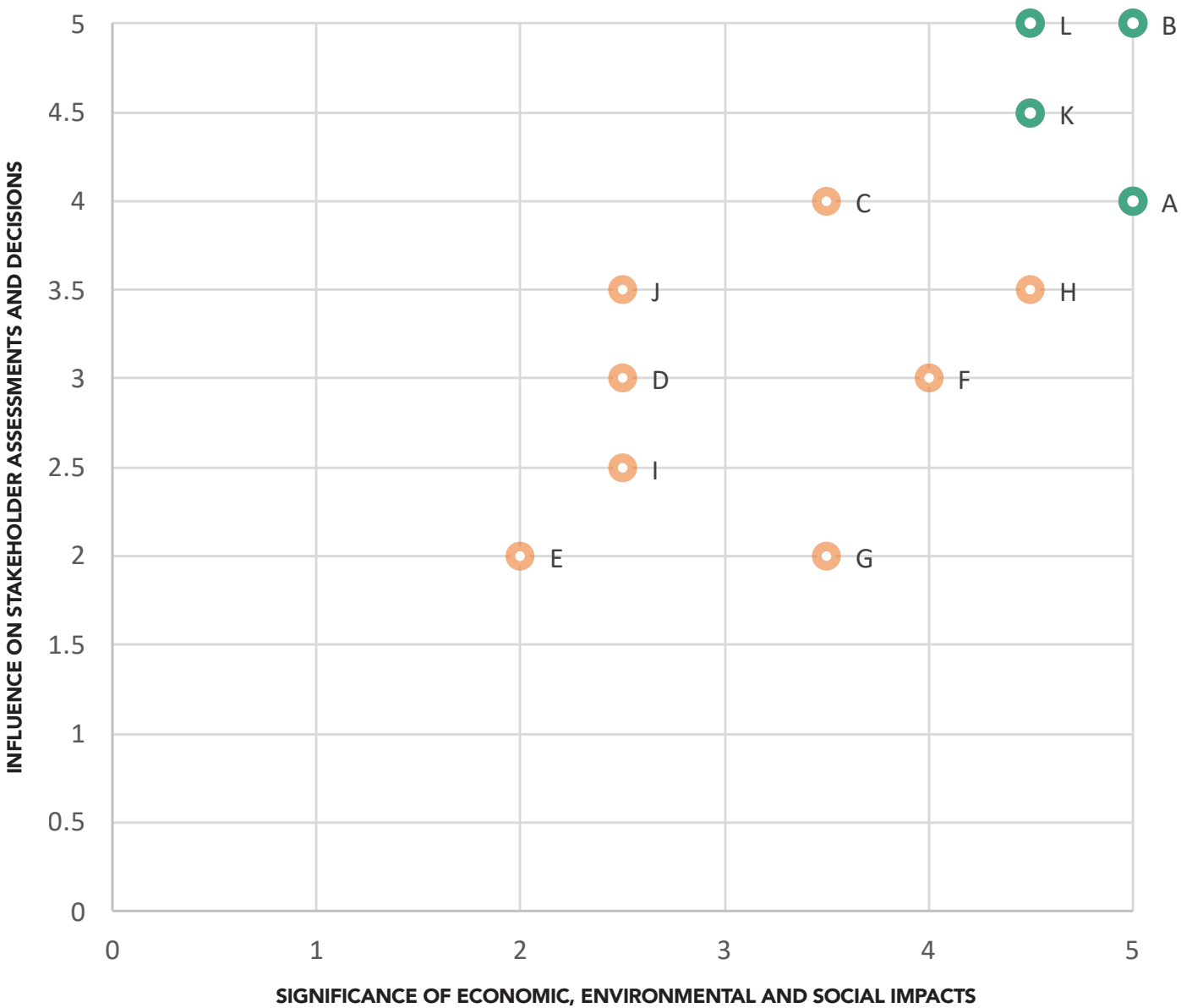
KEY DATA

	KEY DATA		2022	2021	2020
GRI302-10	Total Energy Use	MWh	2,992	3,152	1,998
GRI302-19	Renewable Energy % of Total Energy Use	%	19%	11%	15%
GRI305-10	Total GHG Emissions as CO2e (Scope 1&2)	Tonnes	591	610	443
GRI306-20	Total Waste	Tonnes	76	56	55
GRI306-204	Percentage Waste Recycled/Reused of Total Waste	%	70%	72%	62%
GRI303-30	Total Water Withdrawal	m³	20,613	14,801	11,869
GRI404-10	Average Number of Training Hours per Employee	Average	14.3	10.1	4.9
GRI403-22	Number of Lost Time Injuries	Number	1	1	1
GRI403-30	Sick Leave %	%	3.6%	2.7%	1.3%





MATERIAL ASSESSMENT 2023



A materiality analysis shows the issues which are the most important to a business and to the main stakeholders. The grid has two axes, importance on the y-axis and impact on the x-axis. Our materiality is reviewed every year.

Sustainability topics

- |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| A | Process and material innovation                 | G | Implementation of digital systems                  |
| B | Sustainable, certified fibre supply             | H | Skills development at all levels                   |
| C | Adoption of circular business model             | I | Measurement, analysis of water efficiency          |
| D | Compliance to customer requirements (chemicals) | J | Champion children's rights within the supply chain |
| E | Effective supplier management                   | K | Carbon neutrality                                  |
| F | Measurement of Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions       | L | Energy management and reduction                    |



## PEOPLE



## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The cost-of-living challenges faced by businesses and individuals remains front of mind during people decisions. Alex Begg Group remains committed to being a Living Wage Employer and has maintained salaries for all employees accordingly, as well as continued to apply our robust salary review process to ensure we are fair in our pay awards.

During and post-COVID we have experienced a higher level of turnover than previous years, so our Employee Value Proposition (EVP) has been of even greater importance than ever. 'The Great Resignation' has certainly been something Alex Begg has experienced, but where individuals have discovered a new passion or a new path in life post the pandemic, we are supportive and encouraging of the change. Change presents new opportunities

and our colleagues have been great at sharing recommendations for new employees and we have been able to reward accordingly.

It was also recognised that Ukrainian refugees had been housed locally in Ayr and we were able to offer temporary employment which then transferred to permanent. The community within Alex Begg have been welcoming to the new colleagues and we have been able to learn about how we can further help those in crisis.

Our skills matrix and sharing of knowledge has never been more important with changes in headcount to ensure we limit gaps and equally create development opportunities for those who are ready to step into new responsibilities.

## ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is a key priority for the People & Culture team and 2022 saw the return of the Alex Begg Team Day. The business met for a day in May to discuss business strategy, share what departments are responsible for delivering, and team building activities including a tug of war. The fun and energetic day was a perfect way to bring everyone together post pandemic.

The annual staff survey measured our Employee Net Promoter Score, achieving +21, for the first time. This incredibly positive score provides a platform for further growth and engagement with employees. The overall category scores were positively impacted except for pay, but upon investigation the cost of living was the primary driver of the negative score.

There is always opportunity to improve, and our communication and engagement remain ongoing priorities. Employee engagement delivered during 'peak' production time in the final quarter of 2022 was important to drive sustained communication and interactions with teams. While output can make it challenging to feel it is okay to step away from work to engage in activity, the People and Culture team worked around business priorities and department pressures.

## YOUNG PEOPLE

2022 allowed us to work closely with young people in our local community. Both career fairs and school visits were instrumental in explaining to young people who Alex Begg are and the career opportunities we offer. We launched our apprenticeship scheme late in the year and have six new members of the team who are attending college and learning on the job.

The South Ayrshire Work Out Placement scheme supports young students to study and gain work experience during school hours. We welcomed a student who spent time across the business then focused on a project in the design studio. This opportunity followed two young people from the Employability Programme spending four months with the team, gaining work experience where limitations to work might previously have been a challenge.



## WELLBEING

Mental Health First Aiders have been rolled out across both sites with a clear strategy for support and annual workplace activities. We have ensured training of a cross section of ages and genders to meet the needs of as many members of the team as possible. In conjunction with this we have our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is open to all employees and their families. This offers an immediate support for colleagues as required.

For World Mental Health Day we trialled a few holistic remedies including hypnosis and massage. With cost of living being front of mind we also invited a Financial Advisor to join our communication forum and then individuals were free to make follow up appointments. Our weekly onsite physiotherapy has also been key for wellbeing and injury prevention.

## CHARITY & COMMUNITY

Our charity of choice in 2022 extended our relationship with Whitely's Retreat who provide therapeutic short breaks and support for children, young people and their families with cancer and life altering illnesses across Scotland.

Our Christmas Charity event voted to donate to Cash 4 Kids, another local and deserving charity. Our mill in Hawick focused on supporting Stable Life, a charity that provides horse riding and time with animals for young people, and the local Burnfoot Hub which is in the heart of the community where our mill is located.

Spring, summer and autumn donations along with foodbank contributions were plentiful. Our colleagues also felt passionately about supporting efforts in Ukraine and were exceptionally generous with donations that went to help families in the conflict.





## SUPPLY CHAIN

### KEY SUPPLIERS

We value our longstanding partnerships with our suppliers and work together on fibre certification and product development. Our primary yarn suppliers are Z. Hinchcliffe & Sons, Lightowlers Yarns, Lanecardate, Todd & Duncan, Cariaggi Lanificio, Filatura Papi Fabio, Filatura Di Trivero, Loro Piana, Zegna Baruffa, Filati Biagioli Modesto, and Donegal Yarns.

We also worked to improve packaging from our suppliers, and we had a successful trial with a supplier to eliminate plastic banding on boxes. We started the trial in March 2022 and over the year saved an estimated 26 kg of plastic banding from being wasted, as well as time and cost savings for our supplier.



## ANIMAL WELFARE

As a manufacturer of luxury products that contain the finest animal fibres, Alex Begg is committed to ensuring that the activities carried out in pursuit of its business shall not cause suffering to animals and that the highest standards of animal welfare are maintained, according to the Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare.

## CERTIFICATIONS



The Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA) has been increasing the scope of its operations and in 2020 firmly established its work in China. Due to the impacts of Covid-19, the last few years have been turbulent for the cashmere market and therefore of course for Mongolian herders, who

live a semi-nomadic lifestyle and are very vulnerable to economic fluctuations. Fibre certification has been a major topic in 2022 and we met with the SFA in Mongolia to discuss certification and visit certified herders and processing plants.

## TRACEABILITY



While we recognise the difficulty of ensuring traceability within the whole supply chain, we are nevertheless committed to improving traceability through our support of industry organisations. However, we also started our own project on traceability several years ago, called CapraCare™. Through our Mongolian agent, we were able to purchase a small amount of brown cashmere fibre and tracked it through our supply chain as part of the SFA's trial on cashmere traceability, using paper-based transaction certificates. Because cashmere is blended to reduce the noticeable variations of regional and seasonal fibre, a 100% CapraCare yarn yielded a different product from our masters. This is because CapraCare was not blended with any other fibres, so the variation was more apparent. For this reason, we still use CapraCare fibre but blend it at a smaller percentage into the yarn. We have continued the project over the years, which has given us a much better understanding of the cashmere supply chain and a broader level of engagement. We are working on trials with different counts of yarn, in the hope that it could be part of a Begg x Co collection.

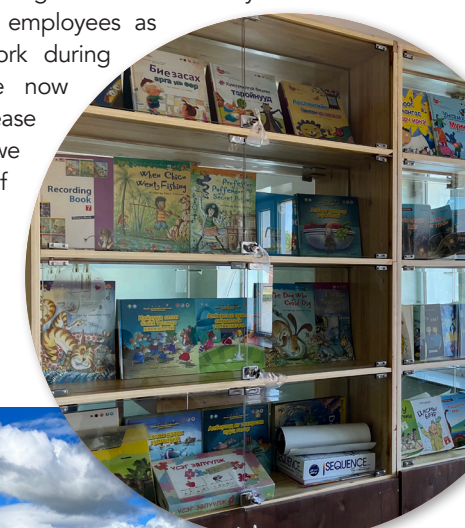
## GOING FURTHER



Animal Welfare and traceability aren't the only areas of interest for Alex Begg, and we have a responsibility to engage with the people of our supply chain, not just the raw material. During 2020 we established links with Sentier d'Action Europe, "SUJE", a small French charity which has been working with schools in Arkhangai.

SUJE has excellent local connections and experience, but also focuses its work on children, which fits in very well with our wider sustainability strategy. In the Mongolian countryside, many children become boarders when they start secondary school, as it's the only way they can access education. However, accommodation, leisure facilities and access to medical care are often very limited and these are areas where SUJE is doing development work. In August 2022, we went to Mongolia and were able to visit one of the schools and see the work that SUJE has done.

At the start of the pandemic, the global textile industry across the world lost highly skilled employees as people found alternative work during lockdowns. Though we are now seeing production increase toward pre-pandemic levels, we are also seeing how the loss of skills is impacting our supply chain. This is a challenge for the industry, and we are playing our part with others in developing new skills and capability.





# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Improving our processes is fundamental to our manufacturing strategy. Efficient, well managed processes will use less energy and water and will produce less waste.



## WASTE MANAGEMENT

As our weaving production levels in Ayr are now moving toward pre-COVID levels, the volume of waste produced is subsequently increasing. However, we are continuing to improve our performance in this area. In 2022 we improved our waste process to ensure accurate reporting and analysis. Begg x Co's direct-to-consumer packaging is plastic free and fully recyclable at end use, made from FSC paper and flat packed so we are not shipping fresh air. We are also working with our yarn suppliers to reduce packaging. At the end of 2022, we began to trial using plastic bags made from 30% recycled material.

Furthermore, we have been working with several partners to upcycle and circularise our production waste:

- Nomad Surplus Luxury Textiles is our partner selling waste materials to the public. Nomad makes our production waste available to retail and wholesale customers through regular live studio sales in Glasgow, pop-ups and in their online store. In 2022, we sold 885 kg of material to Nomad. Though our site in Hawick produces very little waste, 100% is now going to Nomad.
- We have continued our partnership with Dean Liggett, Fashion Lecturer at the University of Ulster. Dean runs a course where students use some of our textile waste to create garments, challenging conventional ideas of textile waste. We gathered some material at the end of 2022 to send to the University in early 2023.
- We have been regularly in touch with Dr John Parkinson, head of iinouio (It Is Not Over Until It Is Over) over the last few years. iinouio set up a textile waste processing plant in Yorkshire and we are currently conducting trials with our design team on recycling production waste and re-spinning into yarn, with the first samples knitted at the end of 2022.
- We also started a new partnership with luxury mattress manufacturer, Harrison Spinks. Harrison Spinks use wool and cashmere in their mattress fillings, and our textile clean waste is now being upcycled into their production process. This means our surplus becomes their raw material, and Harrison Spinks is able to source some of their fibres closer to home.

These projects and partnerships are facilitating our goal of circularising our production waste. In addition to this, our waste contractor in Ayr sends non-recyclable waste to energy recovery instead of landfill, meaning that our factory in Ayr sends zero waste to landfill.



## ENERGY MANAGEMENT

2022 saw some improvement in our energy management. Our overall energy consumption reduced by 6% and both sites had successful ISO 50001 audits. In November we also moved to 100% REGO electricity. Our internal audits through the year also showed a good level of awareness of energy management among staff, especially due to the energy crisis. Energy management will continue to be an important topic in 2023 as we continue our work on energy saving opportunities and plan for carbon neutrality.

## WATER MANAGEMENT

**ROADMAP TO ZERO** In 2022, we increased our overall water consumption but improved our water efficiency by 8%. We were able to develop a shorter scour cycle for samples, rather than use a cycle designed for bulk production. Of course, water is not in short supply in Scotland, but we have carried out an initial mapping of our supply chain to better understand the impact of water use upstream. This shows that our supply chain requires scouring of raw fibres (wool and cashmere) in a few areas which have much more significant water stress than we do. We are also working on completing ZDHC's Supplier to Zero Progressive Level in early 2023, furthering our engagement with chemicals used in the supply chain for





# LOOKING FORWARD

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2022 saw the outbreak of war in Ukraine, the hottest year on record in the UK, and the rapid rise in food and energy costs. It is a time for growing leadership and business must do its part. We cannot influence and control everything, but where we can, we have a responsibility to promote positive impacts.

The market’s push for sustainable solutions is also becoming increasingly important for the world’s leading luxury brands and Alex Begg is committed to meeting this demand. Our industry-leading work with sustainability and product development is core to the business, building the Begg x Co brand as well as serving bespoke customers operating in the luxury market. We returned to growth in 2022 with record sales driven by a high demand for luxury products. This is a fantastic result bearing in mind the challenging business climate we are operating in, and we see our people as a major reason for our success. We work to consider the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders and this is part of the commitment that we have made within our application to become B Corp certified.

Over the next few years, we will be transitioning to comply with the EU Strategies for Textiles directives, including the creation of digital processes and labels to ensure traceability. We will launch Next-Generation Connected Product technology to allow our customers to engage with the traceability of each product and to connect with circular business opportunities (resale and recycling).

We will continue our partnership with The Glasgow School of Art, hosting the first three-months internship at Alex Begg for the recipient of the Scholarship awarded in 2022.

We will also have five modern apprentices joining the business from late 2022 to undertake apprenticeships to become Tuners and Mechanical and Electrical Engineers as part of our program to grow young talent and skills. At our knitwear mill in Hawick, we will also be launching a Shima Apprenticeship. As an employer we are committed and have signed up to the Young Persons Guarantee which supports all our initiatives above.

Our approach to ‘Making a Material Difference’ conveys both our ongoing focus on product leadership and responsibility to create a broader positive impact.





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As a sign of our commitment to the circular economy, we have had this report printed on paper manufactured using waste from textile processing (15%) and recycled paper (40%).