



October 2021

Sapling

Sussex



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Jan 2023

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The Nest



Sapling

London

# B Corp Impact Report 2023



Jan 2023

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# A note from our Co-Founder

2023 has been another whirlwind of a year for Sapling which has seen us grow by 49% in an incredibly tough market. Since launching the brand in 2018, our goal has always been to lead the way with sustainable spirits and help to push the industry towards a more sustainable future. Every year we grow vindicates our mission and shows that both the trade and direct customers are increasingly choosing ethical alternatives to their drinks. From an impact perspective, increased scale has brought both more challenges and greater opportunities. This report will outline these and shed light on our achievements and shortcomings throughout the past 12 months.

I'm proud to say that we have achieved many of the goals set out in 2022, most notably with regard to lower carbon packaging formats, circular end-of-life schemes, and the implementation of progressive workers benefits.

It has also been the first full year in which we have had access to granular carbon accounting, meaning that we have a) had a longer period to assess hotspots and therefore make more targeted changes, and b) had more time to implement them.

Our B Corp journey continues to force us to examine all aspects of our business and identify areas where we can improve or haven't had the resources to focus. It has helped us develop a more holistic approach to social and environmental issues and widen our aims and ambitions, all of which will be outlined in this report.

In short, we are incredibly proud of our products and the environmental impact that they offer. In order to improve, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges we have faced. Only then can we continue to develop as a purpose driven company and help others to do the same.



**Ed Faulkner**  
Co-Founder &  
Head of Sustainability



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# Elevate Your Spirit

Generosity is at the heart of everything we do. We give to our people and planet, of both today and tomorrow.

Impact reporting is an essential tool that companies have to show their commitments to environmental and social sustainability in a public and transparent way. Every report published puts pressure on those haven't.



October 2017 West Scotland

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October 2018 West Scotland

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March 2018 Peckham

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November 2018 Oxford

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## Sapling as a B Corp



We began our B Corp journey in 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic. It gave us important time to look inwards at our own processes and focus on the impact assessment.

Although we were confident that we were already strong on our environmental credentials, the impact assessment shone a light on other areas which we worked hard to develop. After a year of introspection, tweaking processes and formalising existing ones, we ended up with a score of 111.7.

**Environment - 23.5**

**Workers - 24.3**

**Community - 45.1**

**Customers - 2.2**

**Governance - 16.4**



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While we are proud of our score, it is essential that we continue to use the impact assessment to identify areas we can improve and act on them.



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## Environment: 2023 overview



2.24kg  
Co2

-38%

1.4 kg  
Co2

### Vodka Pouch

Raw materials	53.7%
Storage + distribution	26.6%
Packaging	7.5%
General	5.9%
Production	6.3%
End of life	0.0%
Nature Based Offsets	-100%



As we scale it is increasingly important that we continue to scrutinise our environmental impact and continue to innovate throughout our supply chain and environmental projects.

In 2023 we focused on targeted reductions based on hotspots identified by our carbon accounting. This resulted in the launching of 2 packaging solutions which offer customers a drastically reduced carbon footprint.

## 2023 Achievements

1. Launched our 70cl refill pouch that offers over 38% CO2 savings per 70cl.
2. Developed a aluminium 5cl bottle which is less than 20% the weight of our glass 5cl bottles.
3. Implemented a completely circular recycling scheme for our pouches in partnership with Royal Mail and Terracycle.
4. Planted 130k trees across the globe and saved over 100k bottles.

## Room for improvement

1. We said we would move to a 100% renewable production facility. This currently still within development due to distillery pushing back the launch to Q3 2024.
2. Monitor & reduce water wastage. This has been pushed back due to a lack off funds.

## Knowing our footprint

We adhere to the highest levels of carbon accounting through ClimatePartner.



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# Environment: 2024 plan



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## Where can we improve?

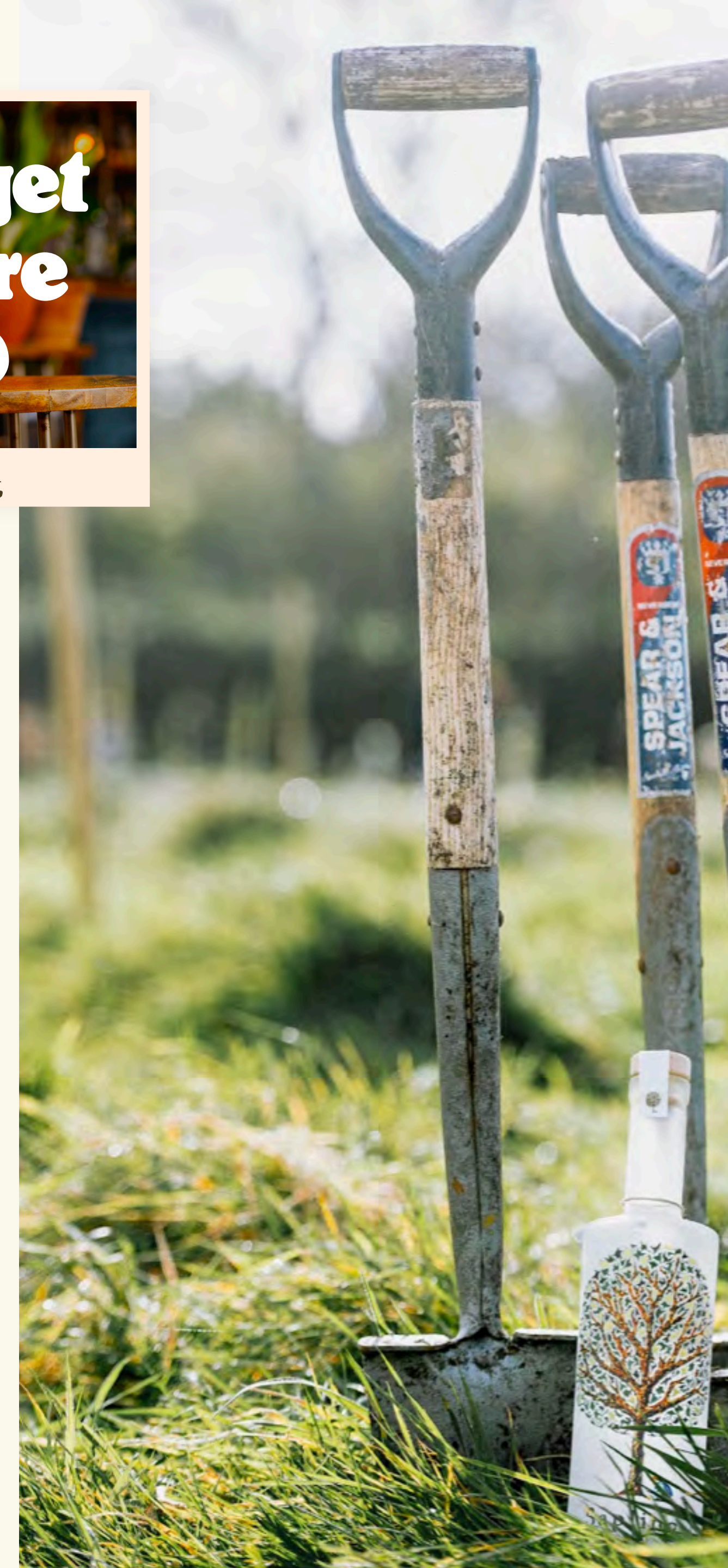
Our focus for 2024 is to continue to reduce our supply chain emissions. While our move to a lower carbon distillery has been delayed, we are confident this will happen in the first half of this year. We have also identified 2 significantly lighter bottles which we will be switching over to as we grow our 70cl bottle volume.

## 2024 goals

- Reduce our bottle weight by over 25%. This is already in motion and we aim to launch it in H2 2024.
- Complete the move to a 100% renewable distillery
- Launch our Regenerative Vodka
- Plant 195,000 trees and save 150,000 bottles



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# NPD - Regen + Aluminium 5cl



We are launching an Aluminium 5cl Vodka as House Pour across Virgin Atlantic planes. Aluminium is much lighter and has a significantly lower carbon footprint than glass, making this product a great alternative to glass bottles.



2024 will also see the launch of our Regenerative Vodka, made using 100% regenerative wheat in an off-grid distillery. The liquid itself will be zero carbon at source. The regenerative range will be more expensive, with an RRP of ~£50, and will be used to win advocacy with top accounts and Michelin star restaurants while demonstrating what is possible with sustainability in drinks.



“We’re so proud to create the UK’s very first hotel forest garden, in collaboration with Sapling Spirits. They’re a brilliant brand who share our sustainability ethos and have helped to create an edible landscape for our chefs and mixologists to pick from.” - **Ollie Hunter, Head Chef, Raithwaite Hotel**



“We absolutely love Sapling, particularly around the bag in box... to reuse the bottles, especially since they are so beautiful, is the way to go.” - **Jane, The Ideal Collection**



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## Workers: 2023 Overview

At Sapling we try our best to have an employee first approach. Working in a small business isn't always easy - there is less process and more of a focus on independent work. It makes it all the more important to create a open and collaborative workplace, have policies that enable employees to achieve their goals in a way that works for them, all the while providing the support and perks needed to keep motivation and morale high!



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## 2023 Achievements

1. Implemented a private health care policy for all full time employees
2. Implemented a working abroad scheme in which employees can spend 2 weeks working fully remotely.
3. Offered opportunities for employees to input on the direction of our company's environmental investments.

## Don't Take it from Us!

“Here we really want to push the boundaries of what is possible in sustainable spirits. We are constantly challenging the industry and ourselves to do better and work towards a more sustainable future. This helps great innovation and means no two days are the same, one day I could be reducing transport emissions and the next arranging to distil a spirit using energy from mushrooms and after that some tree planting. It keeps me on my toes and makes me believe Sapling is here to do good in the world.” - Ned Neville-Rolfe, Head of Operations

# Sapling Workers: 2024 plan



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## Where can we improve?

The lack of structure in start ups has huge benefits but also many shortcomings. On the one hand, there are opportunities to learn and get involved in many parts of the business. Also, to provide input into other departments and have visibility of a broader range of operations.. On the other, the lack of managerial structure and hierarchy means that opportunities for formal professional development are hard to come by. This is something that we hope to tackle in 2024, as well as further health and wellbeing perks and employee recognition.

## 2024 goals

1. Professional Development Opportunities: Provide ongoing training and development opportunities for employees to enhance skills and advance careers.
2. Implement health and wellness programs such as the cycle to work scheme and workplace nursery.
3. Employee Recognition and Appreciation: Recognise and celebrate employee contributions through formal recognition programs and team activities.

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“I have been with Sapling for 5 months in a role that didn’t exist before my arrival. It has been really great working with the Sapling team and they have all been very supportive and have made it comfortable as I ease into my role.

Sapling is a young and fun company with a relaxed and talented team which I am having the opportunity to learn from and grow in my position, whilst focusing on zero-waste and sustainability.

Sapling has given me the opportunity to learn different skills outside of my role if it’s something I am interested in.” - **Tidge Aydin, Brand Ambassador**

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## Community: 2023 overview



Community is one of the broadest impact categories, and applies to all communities that we operate in, including ones we hire and source from. In 2023 we focused on continuing to give back to the communities who drink Sapling, while ensuring our supply chain adheres to high standards of social and environmental sustainability.



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### 2023 Achievements

1. Created an official Code of Conduct for suppliers to sign in order to a) ensure our suppliers are adhering to high environmental and social standards, and b) encourage suppliers to take further steps towards sustainability.
2. Achieved a net job growth rate of 75% and greater workplace diversity, with now over 50% of employees female.
3. Our Co-Founder co-chaired the B Corp Regenerative Working Group, becoming an integral part of a community of sustainable brands looking to do better.
4. We organised 3 tree Sapling owned tree planting days with community and stakeholder engagement.

### Room for improvement

1. Engage with policy decisions that further incentivise a) sustainable farming, and b) business investments in community and environmental projects.

# Sapling Community: 2024 plan



## Where can we improve?

Sapling's main focus when it comes to community has always been to support communities through improving local environments through tree planting. Our trees can help with mental health in cities, regulate water and air pollution, and provide urban foraging opportunities.

Alongside our tree planting, in 2024 we plan to increase our educational output through events.

## 2024 goals

1. Increase the level of education that Sapling can offer through workshops and talks on topics such as sustainable agriculture, responsible consumption, and environmental stewardship.
2. Continue to push towards great workplace diversity.
3. Implement more urban planting projects that have a greater impact on the communities around our stockists.



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## Customers: 2023 overview



A big part of our customer focus has always been linked with the societal benefits that our tree planting projects offer. This year we hosted over 250 trade customers at multiple tree planting events.

We also moved towards customer ownership, and have everyone the opportunity to buy Sapling shares through a crowdfunding campaign.

### 2023 Achievements

1. Continued to involve our trade customers in our tree planting events. We invited over 50% of trade customers to tree planting events throughout the year.
2. Enabled customer ownership through a crowdfunding campaign which saw micro investors receive benefits and perks for buying Sapling shares.
3. Involved customers in product development and incorporated feedback both into the design and flavour profile of our Regenerative Vodka.

### Room for improvement

1. Survey our customers to understand where they want to our environmental funds diverted to have the maximum impact to them.



400+ 5 star reviews across multiple platforms



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# Customers: 2024 plan



## Where can we improve?

While we provide open forums for feedback through our social media and online reviews, in 2024 we plan to set up a more formal feedback process where customers are invited to input on our website and through surveys.

We also want to improve our labelling so that customers are aware of the environmental impact of their purchases, and help push the industry forward with eco labelling.

## 2024 goals

1. Provide clearer and more comprehensive labelling of products, including environmental certifications and necessary cautionary labelling.
2. Consumer Feedback Mechanisms: Establish a more formal channel for consumer feedback and engagement, including online surveys.
3. Continue to host customer engagement events throughout 2024 with a focus on education, transparency, and environmental + social impact.



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“I first got introduced to Sapling Spirits a year ago. I initially fell in love with the companies connection to nature, their ambition to lead on sustainability in spirits and the transparency they show for their impact. I then tried the liquid and was blown away by the subtle flavours that make Sapling stand out from the rest.” - **Jason Atherton - Michelin Star Chef and Restaurateur**



“Fast and efficient service. Personalised bottled looks amazing and my son was so happy with this. He rates this as the best vodka he has ever had as it tastes so smooth. The bottle was so well wrapped and arrived in time for Christmas. Will definitely be buying this vodka again.” - **Sam P. Happy Sapling Customer No.1**

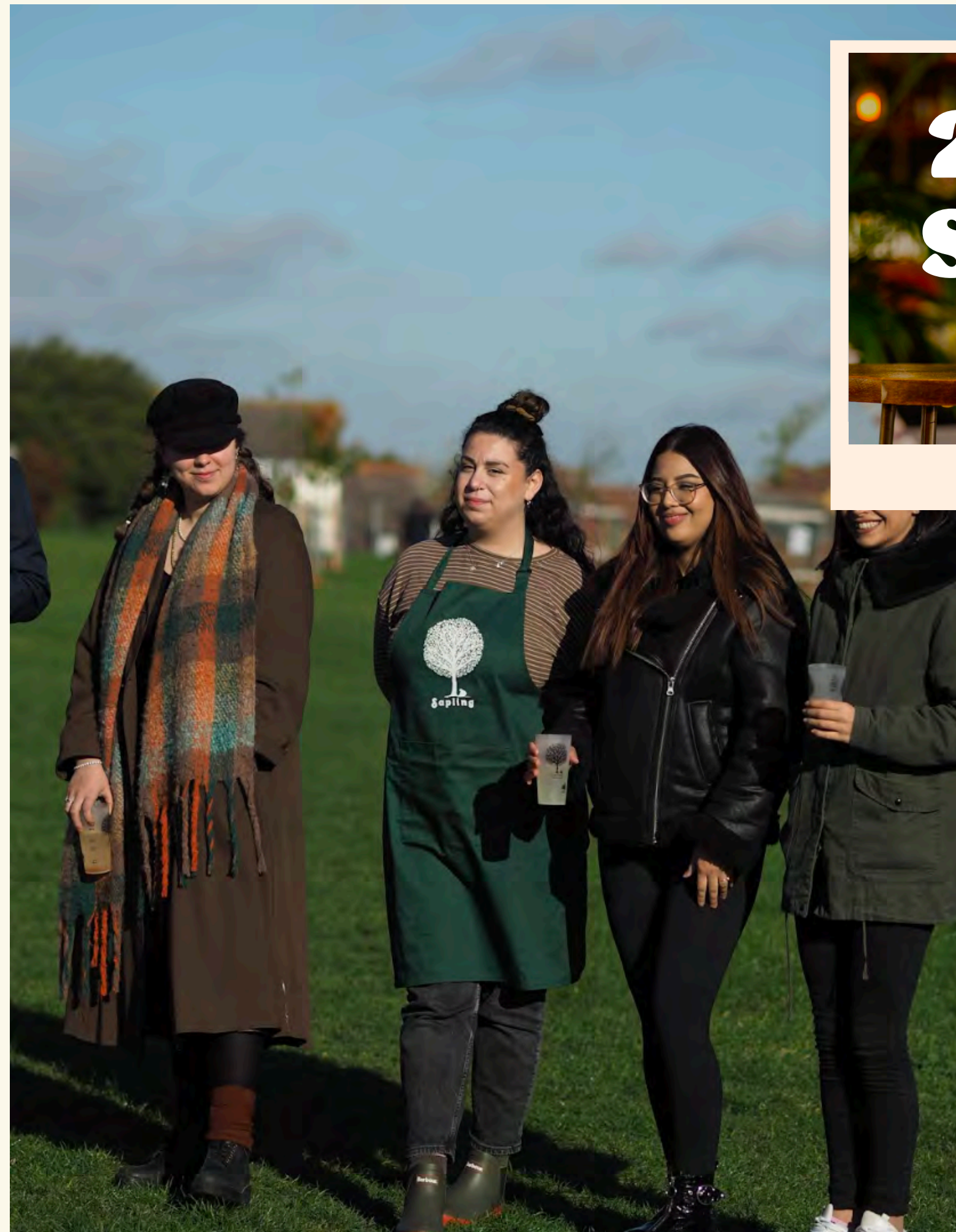


“Impressive all round. Website really easy to use, prompt communication and delivery. The gin itself is very good, really fresh, smooth to drink - the new go-to for G&Ts.” - **Ed R. Happy Sapling Customer No.2**



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# Governance: 2023 overview



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The majority of our points for Governance comes from our Mission Lock (10) which means that our commitments to environmental and social sustainability are preserved by incorporation into our company documents.

The focus for 2023 was to continue to monitor environmental innovation and performance through operational KPIs.

## 2023 Achievements

1. Implemented quarterly environmental efficiencies that were tracked through KPIs and performance review meetings.
2. Conducted a 3rd party audit of all business practices, from operations through to sustainability and governance processes.
3. Made all of our product carbon footprints and impact reports available on our website.

## Room for improvement

1. Improve the depth of our impact reporting through working with a third-party to produce a full LCA of our products that will include more than just CO2 accounting. This was missed in 2023 due to a lack of funds.

## 2023 finances

We have a commitment to the highest levels of financial transparency.

**2023 Revenue**

1,923k

**2023 EBITDA**

-678k

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# Governance: 2024 plan



## Where can we improve?

In 2024 we are planning on increasing stakeholder engagement through education and reforestation projects and making our finances more accessible.

On top of that, we are hoping to bring on a board member who is neither an employee nor owner of the business.

## 2024 goals

1. Build out our board of directors to include members who are not executives or owners of the company.
2. Increase financial transparency by broadening the reach of our quarterly financial updates
3. Engage more with suppliers on sustainability initiatives, which could lead to collaborative schemes and greater impact.



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# Final Word

Thanks for reading. If you have got this far, well done. You are one of the people that really cares. Like, REALLY cares. Often, social and environmental impact is glossed over and reduced to headline or bitesize snippets. It is public and in-depth reports like these that are so important to show customers exactly what companies are doing, but also to hold them to account. To make sure that pledges are kept and that companies have to answer for their shortcomings.

Thanks also for being part of the movement. Without you, we wouldn't be able to exist in the way that we do. We wouldn't be able to dedicate the time and effort to ensuring we reach the highest standards possible. We are eternally grateful.

Finally, thanks for coming on our journey with us. If you ever need any more information, or want to get more involved, we are all ears.

Yours,  
The Sapling Team

