

caroline  
gardner

*2024 impact report*

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# our journey



**1993**

A chance encounter over a neighbour's flat tyre leads to Caroline's first handmade card commission for a Japanese gallery. Inspired by the success, she starts crafting more from her home studio.



**1994**

First UK stockists include Heals, Conran, John Lewis, and small boutiques.



**1995**

Big year of firsts:  
First trade shows: House & Garden and Top Drawer.  
First printers: Great Eastern Press, East London.  
Despatch moves to JBH's warehouse in Gloucestershire.



**1996**

Growth continues:  
Hire our first employee, Rachel!  
Appoint first UK sales agents and overseas distributors in the US and Europe.



**1998**

Open our first office at The Old Power Station, Mortlake High Street.



**2001**

Renovated a disused shop into our first combined office and retail space in Barnes.



**2002**

Launched our website: [www.carolinegardner.com](http://www.carolinegardner.com).



**2004**

Began supporting the Meningitis Trust (now Meningitis Now) after Caroline's son recovers from Meningococcal Septicaemia. To date, we've raised over £280,000.



**2014**

Open our flagship boutique on Marylebone High Street, London.



**2015**

Commit to using only FSC-certified paper and printers.



**2019**

Patented InFold, our innovative plastic-free card corner, eliminating around 5 million single-use plastic bags annually.



**2020**

More eco-friendly innovations:  
Launched plastic-free roll wrap, adding an extra 2m of paper per roll.  
Replaced bubble wrap and plastic air pockets in parcels with recycled paper products and paper tape.



**2024**

Switched to 100% green energy for office and retail.  
Embarked on the path to becoming a certified B-Corp.  
Our team grew to over 40 incredible people!

# meet caroline

## Introduction from Caroline Gardner, our Founder, on the history of our Brand Values:

I've always seen the Caroline Gardner brand as sharing my own values, and family has been a cornerstone of my life. Growing up as one of four and later raising four children of our own, I've learned the balance of getting on with things while being mindful of others. In a busy family, you quickly understand that nothing will happen unless you make it happen, but for the benefit of the long term, you have to navigate the needs and sensibilities of those around you.

Creativity has always been part of that balance. I've never been afraid to think differently; to reimagine the everyday and solve problems in unexpected ways. It's what sparked the early designs and still guides us now: a belief that creativity isn't just about design, but about how we approach anything in life.

Quality has been at the heart of everything we produce from the very beginning. I've always cared deeply about how things are made, how they feel, and how they last.

The concept of 'meaningful giving' being a core value which runs alongside the principle of thoughtfulness, both helping define our team and our relationships. Over the years, with an overriding interest in our environment, responsibility has become a guiding principle - whether reducing plastics in our supply chain or creating timeless, lasting products.

What drives us now is taking responsibility even further. But it's about more than just the environment - it's about balance in every sense. Everything from supporting our team's work/life balance to nurturing long-term partnerships and ensuring that the products we create are lasting investments that bring joy and value to our customers' lives.

With Charlie now helping lead the way, I feel proud knowing these values will continue to guide the next chapter of our journey.



## Q+A with charlie

Charlie Gardner, Head of Strategy, Change and Resource

**Q: What does responsibility mean to you, and how are you driving it forward at Caroline Gardner?**

A: To me, responsibility goes beyond reducing waste and material usage - it's about creating something that could endure forever. Not that I'm suggesting Caroline Gardner will last forever, but it's a principle that can be applied to everything we do. We can't rely on resources, whether paper, profit, or people, without ensuring the sustainability of their sources. This idea acts as a guiding rule for how we want to operate.

As a business, we're committed to growing responsibly. That means building strong foundations for growth, being mindful of the renewability of each component of this growth, and constantly checking for growing pains along the way to ensure that every component is happy. Responsible growth is inclusive growth - it benefits everything and everyone it touches along the way.

**Q: How do you see the company's brand values evolving in the future?**

A: It's hard to say exactly, but our values - **quality, thoughtfulness, creativity** and **responsibility** - are as relevant as ever; the future lies in weaving them even more deeply into how we operate. This means being bolder about communicating these values to our customers and partners, finding new ways to lead with kindness, and holding ourselves accountable for meaningful progress.



### Q: How do these values shape decisions today?

A: Including our brand values in decision-making hasn't always been a conscious decision. That said, it's easy to see how these values have shaped our business as it stands today.

We love kind, thoughtful people, and we believe that if our company is made up of the right kinds of thoughtfulness, then we can't be anything but brilliant. So, we've built a team full of genuinely thoughtful individuals who reflect that spirit in everything we do.

We wouldn't be good at what we do as a design brand if we weren't using **creativity**, but it's important to emphasise how it bleeds through the whole business. Our thoughtful culture creates a safe space to take risks and be bold. That's what allows us to play with unexpected placement and colour, and to apply the same mindset to all our ways of working.

Next, we wouldn't be anywhere without our affinity for high **quality** products and exceptional work. We're always focusing on how we can build the highest quality product or give the highest quality interactions across our business.

**Responsibility** is where we are looking to make the most strides. It's not always easy for businesses to look forward and prioritise responsible work beyond the simple imperative to survive. However, 30 years into our journey we are now leaning firmly into how we can make more and more sustainably minded decisions.

### Q: What excites you most about the future of the business?

A: As an independently owned and run family business, we've always been proud to do things our own way. It's a hopeful and encouraging story, that of a business started from little more than some thick card and a roll of wire and growing into a brand that's thrived for 30 years. What excites me most is continuing that story alongside the incredible team who make it all possible, looking to the future to put our collective spin on this wonderful world of design.

What's especially inspiring is the wealth of opportunity that still lies ahead. For a business as established as ours, there's so much room to innovate - whether it's refining our processes, developing our policies to be more inclusive, or building even stronger connections with our like-minded partners. My hope is that we create an incubator-like environment where everyone has the agency to make positive changes and can feel like an active author in our shared story.



## *materiality mapping: focusing on what matters*

### **What is Materiality Mapping?**

It's a process to identify and prioritise the issues that matter most to our business and stakeholders, ensuring our decisions align with our values and the people we serve.

### **How We Did It**

Internal focus: our first workshop involved key team members (buying, sales, strategy, and marketing) reflecting on stakeholder priorities, supported by sustainability consultants, Future Shift.

# *key stakeholders identified:*

## **Customers**

Care about quality, design,  
and ethical practices

## **Our People**

Value an inclusive,  
growth-oriented work  
environment

## **Suppliers**

Seek fair, sustainable  
partnerships

## **Environment**

“Appreciates” our  
sustainability efforts  
like reducing waste and  
carbon

## **Local Communities**

Benefit from our  
charity and community  
initiatives



# materiality matrix

## Prioritising What Matters Most

We created a Materiality Matrix to rank issues based on:

- Importance to stakeholders.
- Impact on the business.

## Top 6 Priorities:

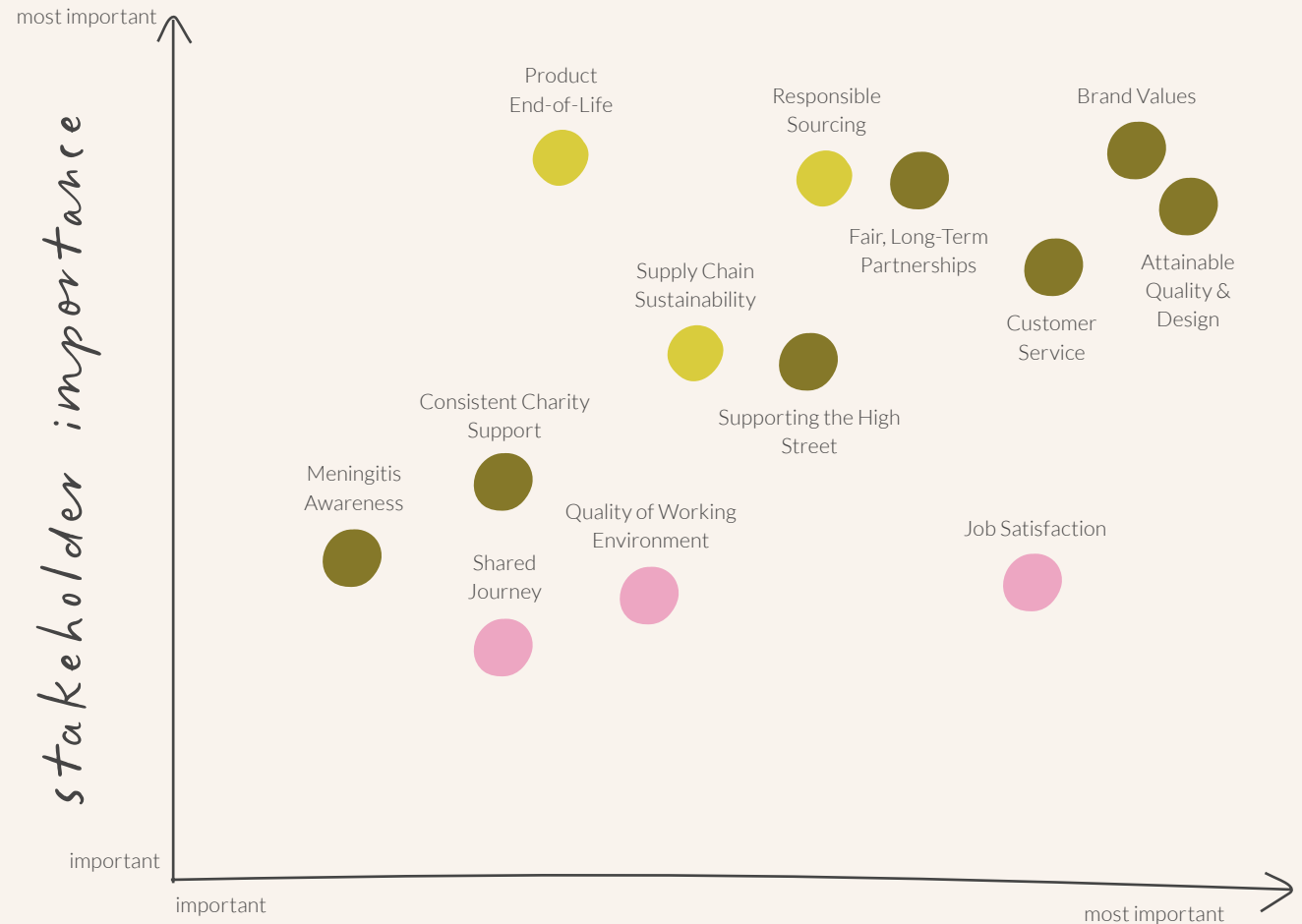
1. Brand Values
2. Positive Employee Journey
3. Attainable Quality & Design
4. Customer Service
5. Fair, Long-Term Partnerships
6. Responsible Sourcing

## What's Next?

We'll hold annual workshops to refine our priorities with more direct stakeholder input, ensuring our growth is guided by what matters most.

## Tracking Our Progress

Clear objectives and KPIs are now part of our strategy, with regular reporting to keep us on track and aligned with our values.



business impact

- Community
- Environment
- People

# our year in numbers



**8.25**  
employee satisfaction score



**93.4**  
B Corp score



**4.7 million**  
cellos saved last year from the use of our infold corner



**£15k**  
donated to charity (Meningitis Now £9k)



**100%**  
of paper used in our products is FSC certified



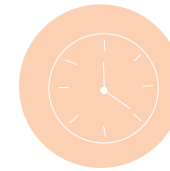
**8.5 years**  
average key supplier partnership length



**91%**  
customer satisfaction score



**100%**  
of parcels shipped with plastic free tape & packaging



**5 years**  
the average time team members have been at cg

# areas for improvement

## 1 . HR Support

We know we can do better here to support our employees. Bringing in an in-house HR officer is step one to making our team more inclusive and supportive for everyone.

## 2 . Training

We didn't communicate our sustainability goals and journey well enough to everyone. We have plans to get everyone up to speed on sustainability and brand values, with team-wide training rolling out next year.

## 3 . Charitable Work

Less than 10% of charity days were used this year. We want to make it easier for the team to use their charity days and share stories about the causes they're passionate about.

## 4 . Carbon Reduction Plan

Our carbon reduction plan is still in the works, but it's coming. We want to make sure we get it right.

## 5 . Reducing Plastic in Our Shop

We haven't made as much progress as we'd like in reducing plastic from other brands in our Retail Shop. We've started challenging our suppliers about cutting down plastic and finding better, greener alternatives.

These misses are just part of the journey, and we're excited to turn them into wins next year.



## *our mission*

Striving to bring joy to people's lives through distinctive design, thoughtful giving, and attention to detail. Our commitment to kindness and sustainability is at the heart of everything we do.

## *our vision*

We believe that when people feel inspired, and supported, they create remarkable things; things that bring joy and make a difference.

By nurturing creativity, responsibility, and care within our business, we aspire to shape a world where thoughtful, distinctive design enriches everyday life and stands the test of time. Our vision is of a future where company success goes hand in hand with a positive impact - for people and the planet.

# our brand values

## 1 . thoughtfulness

We're a family-run British brand grounded in kindness. We're not here to be just another gift brand, we want to redefine what it means to give with care and intention.

We're a team of curious minds who value meaningful ideas and ask thoughtful questions. Whether we're designing a product or a company process, we take the time to think things through.

## 2 . creativity

Design is at the heart of everything we do. We approach it with imagination, playfulness, and a love of the unexpected.

From how we design to how we source and work; variety is the spice of life, so it's always good to think about things creatively, no matter what the task.



### 3 . quality

We are design-led, creating products that overdeliver on detail and quality. Our designs are accessible, always value for money, and crafted with care.

Everything we do aims for the highest standards, sacrificing margin if necessary to create beautiful products and customer service we're proud of.

### 4 . responsibility

We believe beautiful things should be made beautifully - with care for people and planet. From the materials we choose to the way we work; we consider our impact at every step. We design to last, reduce waste where we can, and make conscious choices every day.

Responsibility also means living our values every day. Each of us plays a part in shaping the business we want to be, one thoughtful choice at a time.



## our b corp journey

When we embarked on our B Corp journey, we weren't entirely sure what to expect. We'd heard it might be challenging, and it was — but what we didn't anticipate was just how valuable the process would be for our business.

Achieving our B Corp certification has given us more than just a score; it's provided a blueprint for bettering our business. The process has helped us look at everything we do with fresh eyes — from how we treat our team and engage with suppliers to our environmental impact and beyond.

This isn't the end; it's just the beginning. We're excited to keep using the B Corp methodology and principles to guide our decisions, refine our practices, and see how far we can go.

Our B Corp certification journey wouldn't have been possible without the incredible team at **Future Shift**. A huge thank you to Will, Gavin, and Tilda for their infinite wisdom, guidance, and support. From helping us navigate the B Impact Assessment (BIA) and managing the process, to providing project management expertise and systems, they've been with us every step of the way. They also led our carbon, materiality, and impact report workshops, giving us the tools and insights we needed to make meaningful progress. Most importantly, they've been all-around great people to work with — thoughtful, knowledgeable, and endlessly patient. We're so grateful to have had them by our side on this journey!



# our b corp results

93.4

Our company score was 93.4 out of a possible 200.

governance



workers



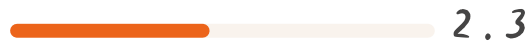
community



environment



customers



## how we achieved this...

Company-wide benefit review:

- GLA
- EAP (Employee Assistance Program)
- Green pension options

Policy Updates:

- Performance reviews
- Training & development
- Inclusive and standardised recruitment
- Health & safety improvements

Building in stakeholder voices

- Materiality workshop
- Questionnaires (Employees, Customers, Suppliers)

Annual Reporting:

- Performance tracking
- Impact Reporting

Supplier screening update

Legal Changes to our Articles of Association

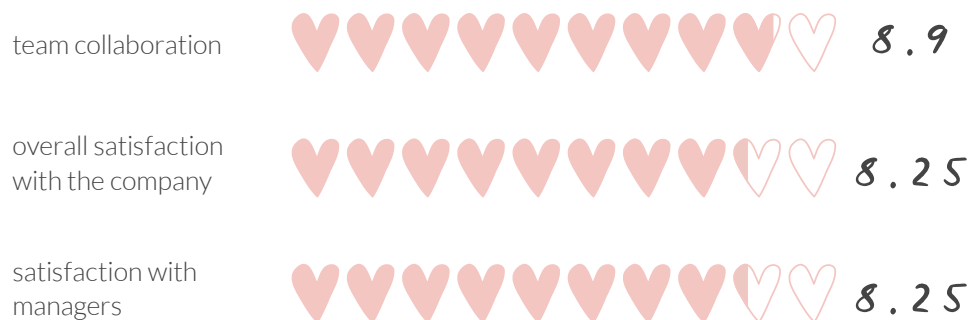
Zero carbon energy



# team engagement

We asked our Head Office team 20 questions with the average score being 7.5

## highlights



## areas for improvement



To foster a positive, supportive environment we have implemented the following changes...

- recruiting a HR Officer
- GLA with Employee Assistance Programme for all
- Health & Safety committee
- improved desk and IT set-ups
- more regular updates

Our target is to get an average score of 8 next survey...

# why I come into work...



**Hannah, Card & Gift Wrap Designer**

“I come to work each day because I’m part of a supportive, collaborative team. My role allows me to be really creative in developing products we’re proud of, while staying true to my values of environmental responsibility.”



**Laura, Sales Associate**

“As a sales associate, I love connecting with others and helping them find something special. It’s especially fulfilling to work with products that are thoughtfully made and sourced sustainably and ethically, knowing that even small choices can contribute to a bigger impact.”



**Norbert, Assistant Accountant**

“I come to work each day as I want to grow professionally and as a person - working at CG allows me to do so. I am surrounded by people who support and care for me. The company’s values align with mine which I think is important in working life.”



**Clio, Senior Buyer**

“In today’s digital world, receiving a thoughtful gift or handwritten card reminds us of the importance of human connection and care. Having the opportunity to create meaningful, responsibly sourced products, partnering with suppliers globally, and be part of a team that shares this passion is what motivates me to come to work each morning.”



**Luca, Senior Account Manager**

“I love coming to work because the team at Caroline Gardner is so friendly and supportive, it feels like a family! We really pride ourselves on excellent customer service and this is something the team and I are really proud of. I get to work with and sell beautiful products I am passionate about; I really believe in our brand and products.”

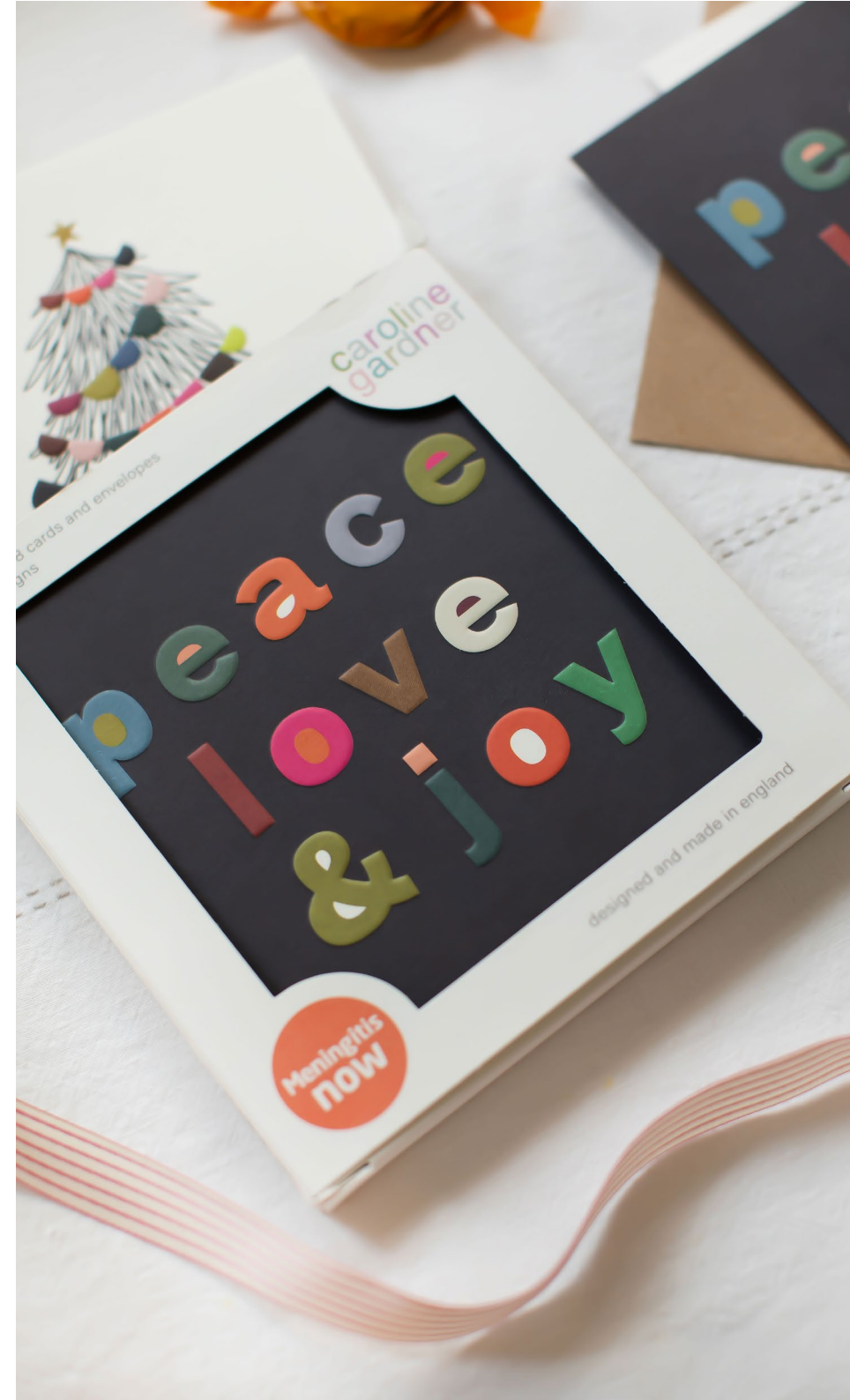
## our charity partner

Meningitis Now's vision is a future where no-one in the UK loses their life to meningitis and everyone affected gets the support they need to rebuild their lives. Every year in the UK, 8,000 people contract either bacterial or viral meningitis. Around one in 10 who contract bacterial meningitis will die.



Founders Caroline and Angus Gardner chose the charity **20 years** ago, having had a personal experience with the illness when their then 6 months old son, Sebastian contracted Meningococcal Septicaemia. Thankfully he recovered and the family looked to help raise awareness and fundraise in the form of Caroline's specially designed Christmas cards.

As a company we have raised in excess of **£290,000** and continue to donate and help raise awareness by including information within our charity card packs. Each pack of Christmas cards proudly displays the Meningitis Now logo and includes information about the charity and their lifesaving work. For every pack sold\*, **25p** will go directly to the charity to fund its campaigns and support families affected by the disease.





charlie and emma running the London marathon in 2022

Tom Nutt, CEO of Meningitis Now, says:

“ In many ways, our partnership with Caroline Gardner Publishing is the model partnership. It starts with the personal support and commitment of Caroline and Angus, but flows through the company in a way that is highly professional and impactful for us as charity.

We have benefitted not only from vital funds, but also from the invaluable awareness that is created with the retailing of products such as high-quality cards and sustainable bags, and with the marketing of the partnership through the web, social media and other channels.

The team at Caroline Gardner are both pro-active in thinking about the charity and always responsive to our asks and suggestions. It is a brilliant arrangement. ”

# our partnerships

We believe our products are only as good as the people who help bring them to life. We're proud to spotlight two long-term partners, Graphite Creative and JBH Associates. Their dedication, expertise, and shared values are key to our story.

## Graphite Creative – St Albans, Hertfordshire

For over 20 years, the core team at Graphite Creative has brought our ideas to life. Though formed in 2012, our partnership with their handy work dates back to 1997, when they were part of James Stewart. They always deliver on quality, and frequently invite us to see our products in production. They feel like an extension of our team.

Andy Potton – Director, Graphite Creative:

“ Caroline Gardner is our longest-standing customer. We're proud to supply high-quality, innovative greeting cards and gift wrap. The relationship works perfectly – their creativity and our expertise go hand in hand. ”

As members of the Greeting Card Association and accredited by the FSC, Graphite's responsible printing aligns with our values.

## JBH Associates – Coleford, Gloucestershire

JBH Associates, our warehouse and fulfilment centre, has supported us for over 30 years. They receive, store, assemble, and dispatch our products worldwide. Their reliability and precision keep everything running smoothly – we couldn't do it without them.

Paul Harrison – Director, JBH Associates:

“ We're proud of our relationship with Caroline Gardner. Over 30 years, we've seen their business grow with their unique, world-renowned stationery and gifts. ”

We're grateful to Graphite Creative and JBH Associates for their dedication and look forward to many more years together.

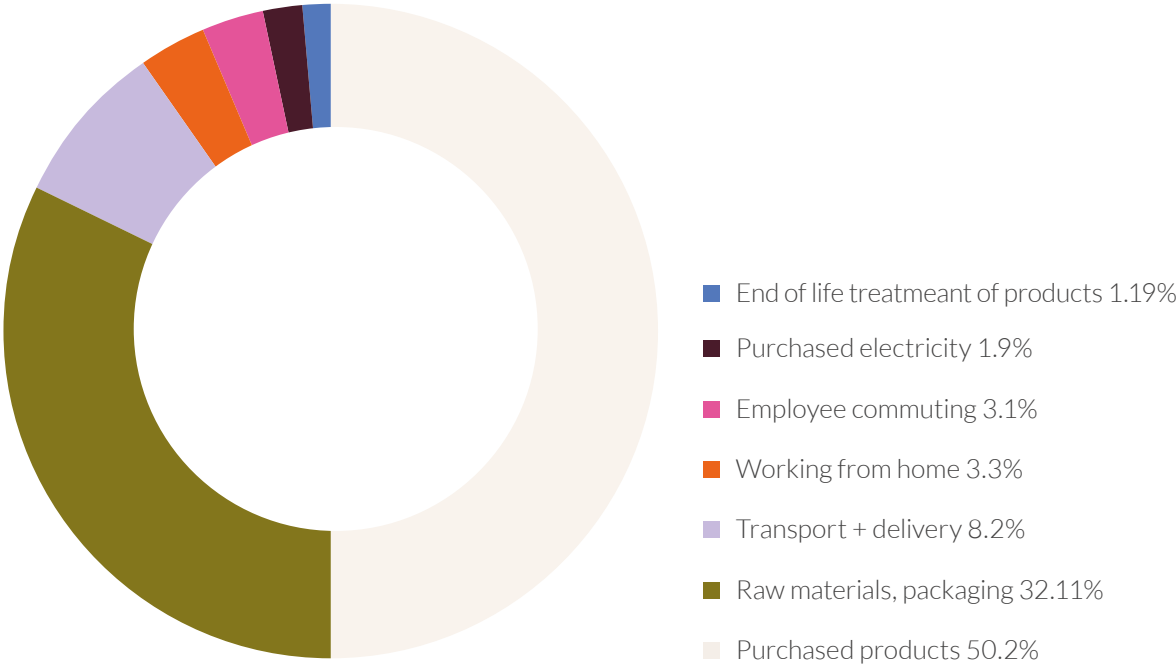
# our carbon footprint

In accordance with the principles and guidelines set forth by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol Corporate Reporting Standard, this carbon report aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of Caroline Gardner's greenhouse gas emissions for their baseline year 2023.

### Summary

Scope 1 (t. CO <sub>2</sub> e)	0%	
Scope 2 (t. CO <sub>2</sub> e)	1.93%	5.51
Scope 3 (t. CO <sub>2</sub> e)	98.07	279.70
Total (t. CO <sub>2</sub> e)	100%	<b>286.62</b>

### Carbon footprint breakdown



# design Q+A with Nicola

Nicola Breen, Design Director

**Q: How would you sum up the brand's design aesthetic?**

A: Caroline has always enjoyed the simple pleasure of using beautiful things in everyday life; whether that's jotting her ideas down in a colourful notebook or putting on a super soft cashmere bed sock. We believe the substance of quality is more than just the physical, a product's feel is as important as its look, form and function. We use a sweet and sour colour palette and spend time on every caption and print to achieve an unexpected sense of placement and attention to detail.

**Q: What makes the Caroline Gardner colour palette and use of colour unique?**

A: Our colour palettes are made up of what we like to call sweet and sour colours. Just as a chef will try to balance sweet and sour flavours to balance a dish, we use sour colours to compliment and balance sweet tones, ensuring something never looks too sweet or, in contrast, too dull.

**Q: What makes for 'an unexpected sense of placement' and does this differ across different product categories?**

A: Generally, designers like to centre images and text and ensure components are evenly spaced, but part of what defines our aesthetic is playing with placement and breaking design 'rules'. On cards we rarely centre the captions, instead placing them to interact with a motif, or off to one side where we want to draw the viewers eye, perhaps balancing a motif that's placed on the opposite side of the card. On printed product, we design the placement of every print, on every product, deciding which motifs fall over folds and edges, playing with scale to make prints feel oversized and cut about to become something more abstract.







**Q: What does being a 'design led brand' mean?**

A: It's being about more than just our bottom line, sacrificing margin to ensure we can make the most beautiful product with every trim and component it needs to have the attention to detail we desire, and the feel and quality we demand.

**Q: What drives you?**

A: We're all product people, from designers and buyers to merchandisers and the sales team. We live and breathe the product, wearing it and using it to ensure it is functional and long lasting. We gift it to our family and friends because we're proud of the product and what the brand stands for. As a designer I'm driven by continuing to push the boundaries of what we can offer and what we look like, always playing with print scale and colour combinations, and improving best-selling styles to ensure we give our customers the very best products.

# packaging innovation

At Caroline Gardner we strive to reduce the negative impact that we have on our environment, both within the UK and worldwide. Our packaging is a huge part of this...

## We have...

In 2019 we developed an innovative card corner clasp on our single cards as a replacement to our existing cellophane wraps. This change has saved over **4 million** cellophane sleeves each year.

Working with our warehouse partner JBH Associates, we removed all plastic packaging from customer orders. All tape and box fillers are now made from recycled paper, meaning our shipping boxes are **100% plastic free**.

More recently we implemented **plastic-free roll wrap packaging**, where a layer of additional paper replaces the cellophane wrapper. This environmentally friendly solution to gift wrap comes without the unnecessary tube inside, leaving room for an extra 2 metres of paper and no cellophane wrap.

## Areas for improvement...

We have identified an area for improvement at our Marylebone shop and Ecommerce site. Some of our stock still arrives at our shop in plastic wrappers and cellophane. We plan to work with suppliers to help reduce the use of plastic in every part of our supply chain.



# ethical sourcing

## FSC certification

All of our paper products come from FSC approved sources - an international, non-governmental organisation with one mission - to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests. For us as a business designing cards for over 30 years, using the FSC label on our cards indicates to our customers that paper and boards from which the cards are created not only confirms that the product comes from a responsibly managed forest but also demonstrates our commitment to sustainability and the environment. When you purchase FSC-labelled products, you're helping forests, and the people that rely on them, thrive.



## Supplier Audits

Our Sourcing Policy and Supplier Code of Conduct are designed to screen our suppliers, ensuring they meet our social, ethical, and environmental standards. We only work with suppliers who share our commitment to fair labour practices, safe working conditions, and environmentally conscious production. By promoting transparency and supporting local economies, we aim to create products that are not only beautifully designed and high-quality but also contribute positively to the communities and environments involved in their creation.

We regularly visit our suppliers to ensure the highest standards of ethical sourcing, product quality, and environmental responsibility. These visits help us maintain strong, transparent relationships and uphold our commitment to fairness and sustainability across every stage of our supply chain.

# our customers

At Caroline Gardner, we value every customer – whether they're trade partners or those who purchase directly from us.

## B2C Customer Insights

Our retail customers play a vital role in shaping our business, and their feedback helps us to improve and evolve. Recent survey results highlight this:

Customer Satisfaction: **96%** of our B2C customers expressed satisfaction with our products and services.

Customer Service: **94%** of B2C customers rated our service as excellent.

Attainable Quality: **92%** of B2C customers praised the quality and design of our products.

## Trade Customer Insights

We are proud to have built long-standing relationships with our trade customers, who help bring Caroline Gardner products to stores around the world.

Customer Satisfaction:  **4.6 / 5**

Customer Service:  **4.8 / 5**

Attainable Quality:  **4.8 / 5**

## Shona, customer review

“Lovely little thank you cards, perfect size, great design, good quality.

They came in a paper box so that's good for the environment, and they arrived quickly also.”

## Ann D, online customer review

“Fantastic wash bag. Given as a present, the recipient was delighted. Lovely colour and quality x”

## Lucy Cornwall and Nicola Connolly, Oliver Bonas

“The company is not only always innovative in its product design but is always so lovely to deal with.”

## Ellie Kleinlercher, Between the Lines

“[Caroline Gardner] is an iconic brand with real design integrity backed up by a wonderful company ethos. Its strides on the sustainability front over the last few years as well as its commitment to charity are also impressive.”

# looking ahead

## **Strengthen HR Support & Employee Well-being**

We're embedding our new HR Officer role to better support our team, with a focus on a positive satisfaction. Our aim is to lift our employee satisfaction score from 7.5 to 8.0 by improving HR support, DEI, and IT systems.

## **Foster Team Engagement in B Corp Progress**

We'll hold quarterly B Corp strategy meetings to encourage open discussions, fresh ideas, and collaboration across the business. Our goal is to have at least 75% of our team actively involved in shaping our sustainability journey.

## **Boost Charitable Engagement & Community Impact**

We want to inspire more team members to use their charity days, aiming for at least 50% participation. We'll continue supporting Meningitis Now and work toward surpassing £300,000 in total donations through product sales and fundraising.

## **Enhance Plastic Reduction Efforts**

We'll keep working with non-CG stock suppliers to reduce plastic packaging across our retail and eCommerce operations. Our focus will be on finding and using more sustainable alternatives.

## **Implement Carbon Reduction Plan**

We'll finalise and launch our Carbon Reduction Plan with clear targets to cut emissions across the business. A new tracking system will help us stay on course and hold ourselves accountable.

thanks!



caroline  
gardner