

# Environmental, Social and Governance Strategy

Creating thriving, sustainable environments through quality grounds maintenance, countrywide.

In 2024 Countrywide launched its ESG strategy "THRIVE":

## TIME

- We believe that there is no time like the present to focus on the future.
- We have made a commitment to invest our time to proactively make changes that benefit you, our environment and our future generations.

## HOME

- We live in, and passionately care about, the communities in which we work.
- We support local projects and local suppliers, taking a holistic approach to positively improve the environment for all.

## RESPONSIBLE

- All our actions are driven by a deeply held responsibility to do the right thing for the environment to the benefit of all - our customers, their customers and communities.
- We strive to lead by making the right decisions to meet the needs of today without compromising the impact of tomorrow.

## INNOVATION

- Our people and solutions are creative.
- We challenge current practices to develop new ideas and ways of working.
- Our ideas are not just solutions for the present; they drive longer-term positive impact, creating a sustainable legacy to the benefit of our customers and the environment.

## VOCATION

- We are a family focused, local employer. We create job opportunities and long-term careers, encouraging and supporting our people to develop professionally.
- We actively work with social and community partners to offer opportunities for local people and underrepresented groups to gain experience, learn new skills and move into sustainable employment.

## ENVIRONMENT

- As a corporate citizen, we believe it is our responsibility to play an active and leading role in improving our environment through sustainability and biodiversity practices.
- We work with our customers, their customers and communities to develop and maintain engaging spaces that benefit local habitats and wildlife, whilst also creating engaging spaces that promote positive health and wellbeing.
- Our practices ensure responsible use of natural resources and the reduction of negative impacts on the environment.

## Our Commitment

- To ensure our services are developed to facilitate sustainable development wherever appropriate.
- To seek to reduce energy demand, minimizing energy wastage and using sustainable energy sources where it is practical.
- To reduce the levels of both direct and indirect pollution associated with Countrywide activities, including adapting its travel and procurement practices to ensure sustainability targets are met.
- To establish sustainable development as a clear feature of Countrywide's activities.
- To encourage the spread of sustainable technologies and services, setting and monitoring relevant, measurable sustainability objectives and targets.
- To monitor and review progress in reducing consumption of resources.
- To meet all relevant environmental legislation and statutory regulations and specify that contractors do the same when working on Countrywide premises or projects.
- To educate, train and develop our employees to work in an environmentally responsible manner and to play a full part in developing new ideas and initiatives.
- To communicate openly and proactively with our customers, our employees, and our stakeholders about environmental policies and best practice to develop and promote environmentally sound and energy efficient practices.
- To encourage manufacturers, suppliers and contractors, through appropriate specifications, to develop and supply environmentally and energy efficient preferable goods and services.

## The Environment

Countrywide recognises the need to operate the business in a manner that reflects good standards of environmental management. The company is aware of the environmental impacts of its operations and will balance its business needs with the need to protect the environment.

This shall be achieved by:

- Identifying all environmental impacts that the company may contribute to through its acts or omissions.
- Strict compliance with all relevant legal requirements, regulations, codes of practice and client directives.
- Evaluate our environmental performance and improve where possible.
- Promote a culture of continual environmental improvement throughout the company.

- Increase awareness and provide training to all our employees to ensure environmentally responsible concepts are integrated into standard practices.
- Identify and mitigate potential accidents that could result in an environmental impact, so that if an accident did occur the consequences would be minimised.
- Minimise the storage and use of all articles and substances providing a substantial environmental hazard, where appropriate.
- Minimise waste through a commitment to the principles of the Hierarchy of Waste Management.
- Maintain awareness of innovations in equipment or machinery to minimise its environmental impact.
- Maintain certification to BS EN ISO 14001:2015.

It is our duty to ensure that good environmental management is practiced in all contracts and projects that we are involved in, and we will seek to influence customers to demonstrate a positive environmental commitment.

## Social Responsibility

This policy sets out how Countrywide integrates its social responsibilities into its operations and values whereby the interests of all stakeholders including investors, customers, employees, the wider community and the environment, are reflected in the company's policies and actions.

Countrywide are committed to ensuring that our business undertakings are conducted as ethically as possible and achieve this by following this policy.

## Who We Are & What We Do

Countrywide are a grounds maintenance company with national coverage and have been established for over 25 years. We operate through a franchise network with each franchisee having a dedicated area in which to operate.

We have a portfolio of over 20,000 sites ranging across commercial, industrial, local and central government, utilities, education and heritage properties.

## Looking After Customers

Countrywide recognise the importance of its customers and will strive to ensure that their needs are met at all times. All operatives will be trained in the particular needs of a site and the specific safety and environmental concerns pertaining to it.

All customers have dedicated contact either at Head Office or in the local depot for any queries or concerns to be raised.

All concerns are dealt with as quickly as possible and where necessary will be escalated to senior management for a solution. Feedback will be sought from customers on what we are doing well, and where improvements could be achieved.

## **Community Engagement**

We run Customer Loyalty Schemes to provide a unique, free service to our partners and the wider community, where we can demonstrate we have the ability to add value. It is our way of giving something back, going over and above contractual requirements to make a difference to local areas.

The Loyalty Scheme identifies labour-orientated work which can be undertaken on customer sites during the winter period. This scheme benefits customers and communities by undertaking activities on site(s) which are not included in the current specification, but which can have a great impact on local areas, improving access, visibility and aesthetics.

Our staff live in the communities in which they work, reducing transport costs and minimising our carbon footprint.

We work with external partners to offer work placements to the unemployed, young people, disabled people, people with mental health issues or learning disabilities, and young offenders.

## **Looking After Employees**

We aim to support and respect the protection of all employees' human rights and adhere to the Equality Act 2010 in terms of striving to eliminate discrimination on any grounds, be it Race, Creed, Colour, etc.

All staff receive regular training to ensure that they continue to work safely, both in terms of their own health, and also their colleagues and the general public.

Feedback is sought and welcomed from all staff as to how to develop this policy and all aspects of our trading relationships.

## **Governance**

### **General**

We monitor legislation changes and ensure that any applicable ones are broadcast throughout the organisation. Our integrated ISO-accredited management system covering Quality, Health and Safety and Environmental ensures consistently applied processes and procedures. We are subject to annual audits ensuring we maintain Quality ISO 9001, Environmental ISO 14001 and Health & Safety ISO 45001.

## Suppliers' Standards

Countrywide only trade with suppliers who can complete a sub-contractor/supplier questionnaire which covers their procurement, employment and environmental practices.

We operate to safeguard against unfair business practices including adhering to legislation such as the Anti-Bribery Act 2010.

## Protecting the Environment

We aim to reduce our impact on the environment through a commitment to continual improvement of all aspects of our operations, this includes not just reducing the use of harmful agents but also to engage in business practices that provide benefit.

We monitor our usage of resources and have in place measurable environmental objectives to reduce our impact on the environment.

## Carbon Reporting

Having collated and submitted our carbon data for 2023, Plant Mark provides us with an annual report, which breaks down the emissions we have measured and those which we are still required to measure. We are currently collating our data for 2024 and will have completed our submission to Planet Mark by the end of quarter 1 in 2025.

Our target is to reduce our carbon emissions by a minimum of 5% year on year to retain our Planet Mark certification. Our Carbon Reduction Plan View by clicking [here](#).



Mark Heath  
Managing Director  
Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Limited  
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