



Our climate ambition: Net zero carbon emissions by 2030

Herbert Smith Freehills has committed to a set of science-based targets and actions we will take over the next few years to reach our goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. Our targets are approved by the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), and they are aligned with what scientists say must happen to reach the goal of keeping global warming to 1.5°C.

We are very proud of our strategy and the progress we have made, and transparency plays a very important role. Therefore, we report on our environmental performance on CDP and our data is audited and verified on annual basis by Carbon Footprint- a leading climate-change consultancy.

Our progress so far – and what’s ahead

As a firm, we’ve made significant strides towards operating a more sustainable business. In 2017, we committed to reducing our carbon emissions by 15%, energy consumption by 10% and paper consumption by 30% by the end of 2020 – and by the end of 2019, we had beaten those goals.

In FY 20/21, we reduced our overall emissions by 76% – driven in large part by a near-total halt to business travel in the face of Covid. As economies open up and the firm resumes more normal operations, we expect our emissions will return to more normal levels.

To reach our net-zero goals, we will need to achieve a 50% reduction on all emissions (2019 our baseline year) and then remove any residual emissions from the atmosphere to achieve net zero by 2030.

We aim to do so by:

- Reducing our emissions from business travel by at least 35%
- Transitioning to 100% renewable energy where possible – up from 54% now.
- Ensuring that 55% of our suppliers (by spend) have science based targets to reduce their own emissions.

Leading change in our sector

The firm is also joining forces with 13 other world-leading businesses to back The Earthshot Prize.

Over the next decade, Earthshot will award five £1 million pound prizes each year – from a pool of 15 global finalists – to help solve the world’s greatest environmental problems. All 15 finalists will receive support to scale their work. As a firm, we will help the winners and finalists with pro bono support from across our legal and Business Services teams.

The Earthshot Prize is inspired by US President John F Kennedy’s ‘moonshot’ initiative, a vision that united millions of people to rapidly develop the technology that took humans the moon. With threats from climate change growing, Earthshot will unite people to help repair our planet and improve life for generations.

We have also teamed up with other legal sector leaders to fight climate change through the Net Zero Lawyers Alliance (NZLA) – a coalition of commercial law firms committed to helping the world achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

We signed up the Green Litigation Pledge and the Green Arbitration Pledge.

Our Global Arbitration Practice has publically committed to reducing the environmental impact of disputes by signing the Green Pledge of the Campaign for Greener Arbitrations (the CGA), a global initiative aimed at reducing the carbon footprint of arbitral proceedings. Signatories of the Green Pledge make a commitment in their personal capacity to minimise the environmental impact of the arbitrations in which they are involved, focusing on the reduction of the environmental impact associated with travel and the use of paper.

The Greener Litigation Pledge is a commitment by law firms, barristers’ chambers and other organisations to reduce the environmental impact of their disputes practices in England and Wales.

The Pledge is the first act of the Greener Litigation Project, which aims to reduce the carbon footprint of court disputes, including by engaging with courts and other organisations to support relevant changes to litigation practice and procedure.