

KASTARCHITECTS

IMPACT REPORT 2025





Tree planting near Falmouth with Plant One

About us

At KAST Architects, we have a desire to help our clients live, work and play more sustainably.

The construction industry is extremely carbon intensive, so, as architects, we have a duty to ensure the designs we deliver minimise their impact on our planet.

Sustainability underpins, over-arches and threads through our approach to each project and is fully integrated within the design process.

We have always believed that there is a better way to do business and so over the years have tried to conduct ourselves in a respectful, ethical and mindful manner.

As a B Corp we have a framework for how we can improve as a business, balancing how we value people, the planet and profit.

This impact report reflects on the three years since we certified as a B Corp and also charts our progress over the past 12 months as we continue to search for small but meaningful ways in which we can improve the way we operate.



Fairfield Barn, Illogan

Leadership letter

Since the birth of KAST in the autumn of 2014, we have always tried to design buildings in a way that minimised their environmental impact, offering our clients a bespoke local design response in a sustainable and thoughtful way.

That approach to architecture will always remain at the heart of everything we do, but increasingly we have been turning our attention to improving how we care for our co-workers, our dealings with customers, the communities in which we work and how we run our business.

It is important for us to continue to grow and evolve, learning from other like minded organisations around us, rather than just sit there doing the same old thing.

As with climate change, doing nothing or doing just enough is not going to cut it. We have to act now if we have any chance of avoiding the most severe environmental and socioeconomic effects of a changing climate.

Nicholas James
Founding Director



KAST's 10th Birthday meal in Falmouth

Business since certification

It has now been three years since our certification as a B Corp and during that time we have been searching for those incremental positive changes that we can make as a business.

By becoming a B Corp you are committing to a cycle of continuous improvement, which to begin with can seem daunting, however, by embedding that culture within the business it becomes a natural part of your day to day operation.

We didn't set out to use our B Corp status as a means to generate more business. Far from it, indeed we have found that drawing a line in the sand can make you question which clients you work with or projects you work on! But as the saying goes, "Those who stand for nothing will fall for anything."

As time has gone by we have found that being a B Corp business has opened new doors for us, sometimes due to a client's curiosity about what it means and increasingly resulting in new commissions.

By far the the most beneficial aspect of being a B Corp is the learning that comes from meeting a broad range of like minded businesses and individuals from many different sectors, all of whom are happy to share their knowledge, learning and ideas, with the primary aim of ensuring we use business as a force for good.



Halswell House, Exton

B Corp verified score



- 97.1 Overall B Impact Score
- 80.0 Qualifies for B Corp Certification
- 50.9 Median Score for Ordinary Businesses

Recertification

In March 2022 KAST certified with a score of 84.9 out of a possible 200. By comparison, the median score for most businesses is 50.9. This demonstrates how difficult it is to become a B Corp, however, we were acutely aware of how much more we can improve by.

Our aim for when we re-certified was to achieve a score in excess of 90. Needless to say we were absolutely stoked to score 97.1.

We have used the last three years to embed the B Corp principles into our working life and constantly assess where we can make small but meaningful improvements.

In short we are laying the foundations for the future of the businesses, where people, planet, and profit are balanced fairly, treated with equal respect and purpose.

Since our recertification we have been reflecting on what changes we have made to the business over the last three years that have resulted in an increase to our B Corp verified score



Wood carving at 7th Rise

Why did we improve?

The incremental improvements have been evenly spread across the five pillars:

Governance, Workers, Community, Environment and Customers.

We feel it is important to give equal weight to these five areas to ensure a holistic approach to doing business better.

Before becoming a B Corp we were focussed primarily on reducing the environmental impact of our buildings. Not a bad starting point, but in terms of running a business it was a bit one-dimensional.

By embracing a more holistic approach we have been able to build trust with our clients and the communities we work in, attract and retain employees, and through a process of continuous improvement, increase our long term resilience as a business.

Over the following pages we will outline the changes we have made in each of the impact areas and the positive impact it has had on us as a business.

Governance

The first thing we did was to find a more ethical bank for our business banking.

After much research we settled for Starling Bank, a business whose founder is the only woman in British history to start a bank, a bank who only partners with brands and suppliers that treat their customers fairly, who does not invest in businesses that are harmful to individuals, groups or society in general and who is a Living Wage employer.

As a business we have started to calculate our office carbon footprint, helping us to identify means by which we can reduce our impact on the planet.

We started to publish our Annual Impact Reports, with a view to being more transparent in how we communicate our social and environmental performance to a wider audience.

This will be our third Annual Impact Report and it will be published on our website, shared on the B Hive Network, the Impact Reporting Archive and publicised widely on social media.



Walled Garden House, Scorrier

Workers

Over the last few years we have worked hard to to improve the work / life balance for our team. This has included introducing a 9-day fortnight. The benefits have been multiple: some have used the extra day to get domestic stuff done; others have spent time with friends or family; some have had a long weekend away without taking an extra day's holiday.

From a business perspective, there has been no discernible loss in profit or productivity; if anything, both have marginally improved. Importantly, staff energy, enthusiasm and happiness levels have all improved.

Financially, we have ensured that the percentage of profits that have been distributed as bonuses to non Directors has increased to over 10% and we have increased the employer pension contribution from the statutory 3% to 5%.

In terms of continual professional development, we have set aside funds for our staff to have the opportunity to increase their knowledge base through training courses. This raises confidence in their own ability and in turn raises the practice's offer to existing and potential clients.



Castle to Castle swim in June

Community

KAST has built strong relationships with a number of local charities in Cornwall.

The practice is working with BF Adventure to create a masterplan for the site to enable them to develop their facilities in a more structured and planned way. The charity uses their outdoor environment, 60 acres of heathland, woodland and flooded quarries, to enable the children and young people to unlock their potential.

We have also just completed a new building for Community Roots, a CIC based in Porthtowan who adopt a 'no-dig' approach to growing organic vegetables for local people. They offer volunteer days and learning opportunities for the community, as well as hosting activities and events. KAST designed the building at a reduced rate while still providing a full service to see the project through to completion.

In June 2024, the entire team took part in the Castle to Castle event - a one mile open water swim from Pendennis to St Mawes, raising money for the RNLI and also Man Down, a non-profit Community Interest Company founded in Cornwall, dedicated to supporting men with mental health challenges. In total the office raised over £5,250.

As a business, KAST continues to contribute to public forums and events on social or environmental topics.



The Community Roots project nearing completion

Environment

All of our designs seek to minimise the amount of carbon intensive materials used in their construction, such as concrete and steel, turning to more natural and renewable materials such as timber.

We also work hard to introduce more innovative solutions to our buildings, such as the straw bale construction of a house in north Cornwall and the move from steel to cross laminated timber on a school in Leicestershire.

We continue to increase our knowledge and expertise in low carbon design by training our team in Passivhaus techniques and with three members of staff now fully certified Passivhaus designers.

We are members of the Surfers Against Sewage Ocean Network - a bringing together of like minded businesses to help protect the UK's unique coastal environment.

KAST is also a Corporate Partner of Plant One, a Community Interest Company that brings businesses, individuals and landowners together to plant native trees in Cornish soil, creating habitats that benefit native wildlife and helping to combat climate change at a local level.



EcoCocon, UAB, (Production), Gedimino 30E, Kybartai LT-70421, Lietuva

104-01

Serial number:
240059-104-01-1

Wall section:
A-1.7

Production date:
2024-12-19

Lorry-Pack:
2-21 B.2.2

NTI-01-061:2024



Badgers Drift - Kast Architects

674 x 1568 x 300 mm

Building with straw in north Cornwall

Customers

It goes without saying that our clients are incredibly important to us. To design someone's new home is a privilege and to manage their life savings is a huge responsibility. Every mark that we make on the page has a cost implication, either positive or negative and so we need to balance client aspiration, design concept and cost at every turn.

Much of our work is iterative - designing a building for a client, discussing options, refining and developing the preferred solution, taking it through the planning process, the technical design stages and on to site. By the time the building is complete there have been hours of conversations and discussions, each one refining the design to meet and exceed the client's expectations.

Customer feedback is tremendously critical in the work that we do, however, this is something that until now we have not formalised.

We have therefore developed a client questionnaire which we now issue at the end of each project. The questions go back to the beginning of the process, asking why they chose KAST, what we were like to work with and whether they would be likely to recommend us to others and why.

The responses collated so far have been wonderfully positive and useful in helping us drive the practice forwards.



Surfers Against Sewage paddle out at Gyllyngvase Beach

The year ahead...

We will always be seeking new ways in which the practice can improve. At the time of writing, KAST will be undertaking the following:

The entire office will undergo Carbon Literacy training to increase our awareness of the carbon dioxide costs and impacts of everyday activities, and how we can reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis.

KAST will continue to undertake energy modelling of all of our projects to ensure we achieve the most energy efficient solutions for our clients.

KAST is developing a new website which will not only help to showcase the work that we do, but also publicly share the feedback from our clients.

This year we will complete the construction of our first straw bale house - hopefully the first of many.

KAST will continue to be transparent in the way that it shares its information.

We want to improve in a small way, every single day. We have a plan and will stick to it.



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Certified



Corporation