



# Corporate Social Responsibility Policy

July 2024

Review Date July 2025

## **Introduction**

Bennett & Friends has begun a journey of growth over the past two years and as such we are now in a new and exciting phase where we can start to focus on priorities that are important to us.

We strongly believe in the importance of corporate social responsibility. We are committed to sustainability, ethical sourcing, and social responsibilities that go beyond providing outstanding food and service.

This policy marks the beginning of our sustainability journey. It outlines our approach and will guide our actions and decisions over the next three to five years and is intended to be a working document that is enhanced and improved on. The policy covers these areas of responsibility:

- Environmental Impact
- Ethical Sourcing & Fair Trade
- Employee Wellbeing & Development
- Social & Charitable Impact
- Health & Safety

### **1. Environmental Impact**

We are committed to reducing the environmental impact of our business activities and are putting in place the following key actions to begin our sustainability journey.

- 1.1 We are continuously working with our team of chefs to investigate sourcing sustainable, seasonal ingredients, how to minimise waste through careful menu planning, how to minimise energy consumption through use of technology, and to ensure we use compostable and eco-friendly packaging where possible.
- 1.2 Our event planning process includes how we are going to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste from the event and the role each team member plays in ensuring we do so efficiently and effectively.
- 1.3 Ensuring our back-office processes are as environmentally friendly as possible. For example, using online accounting software to send and receive invoices electronically, making our publicity materials only available in pdf format, and ensuring we use heating and lighting wisely.
- 1.4 When selecting suppliers to work with we take into consideration suppliers who implement sustainable practices, source products made from sustainable materials, work to reduce waste, conserve energy, and minimise their carbon footprints.
- 1.5 We are investigating opportunities to off-set our carbon footprint through supporting organisations such as The Woodland Trust, and support the work of local charities and community interest companies, such as Silverback Projects CIC, both through donations of food, and staff time on woodland conservation, mental health and well-being and family learning projects.
- 1.6 We encourage staff to participate in practices that align with our values, for

example, consider how they travel to and from work. Staff are encouraged to car share, cycle, or use public transport.

## 2. Ethical Sourcing and Fair Trade

It is important to us that that our ingredients are responsibly sourced and produced under fair working conditions. We prioritise working with local farmers and producers who share our commitment to ethical practices. Our aim is to support fair trade producers by using tea, coffee, sugar, herbal/fruit tea, and chocolate products that are certified fairtrade and ensure that our wine list continues to contain many organic and biodynamic options.

When selecting suppliers to work with it is important to us that they share our values, so we take into consideration their commitment to responsible sourcing, ethical and fair-trade practices and, environmental sustainability. We look at traceability of their products, do they adhere to fair labour practices, do they provide safe working conditions, fair wages and respect human rights; what packaging they use, and how their products are transported. For example, all of our wine is sourced from Liberty Wines, the first UK wine importer to be certified Carbon Neutral and, from 2021, Carbon Neutral Plus - [Liberty Wines - Sustainability](#).

Where possible, we encourage customers to use tap water for their events as the most sustainable option, however, if bottled water is preferred, we serve BELU water which is sourced from the UK, 100% carbon neutral and supports clean water and sanitation through registered charity, WaterAid. [Sustainable Mineral Water & Water Filtration Systems | Belu Water](#)

It is important to us that we support local producers, businesses, and communities by sourcing goods and services from them, whether it is honey from the local beekeeper or vegetables from the local farmer, we engage and work with those at the heart of their communities.

Our current suppliers in the Cotswolds include:

- Vegetable Matters; farmers and producers less than three miles from our Cotswolds kitchen
- David Moore - Family Butchers
- Billy's Woodland Eggs

Our current suppliers in Kent include:

- Dennis of Bexley - Butchers
- Central Wholesale Produce – fruit and vegetables
- Griggs of Hythe – sustainable fish
- Chegworth Valley farm pressed Kentish juices
- Romney Marsh Brewery

We are committed to expanding this list of suppliers to widen our impact and benefit local suppliers.

## 3. Employee Wellbeing & Development

Bennett & Friends firmly believes in the fair treatment of employees, including providing a safe working environment for them, paying them a fair wage, offering equal opportunities, and committing to diversity and inclusion. As the name suggests, Bennett & Friends, we

recognise and value the team that work with us as individuals not just as workers and no matter their age, background, abilities, etc. which encourages a mutual respect.

Bennett & Friends has been an accredited Living Wage Employer since 2019. We currently pay £3.15 per hour more than the 2024 real London Living Wage and keep this rate under constant review. This is because we fundamentally believe that fair pay is the most significant thing we can do to make the world a better, fairer place. Paying a good wage together with fair treatment encourages team members to perform to the high standards expected and contributes to a 'team' environment.

We aim to provide a caring, supportive, safe, and inclusive environment for our team. Discrimination, bullying, harassment, or any form of abuse is not tolerated, and policies are in place that provide guidance to the team on how to report incidents and the actions they can expect to be taken. As such, the team are expected to treat each other, clients, venue staff, and supplier employees with respect and dignity.

We also strongly believe in offering our team opportunities for developing their skills, knowledge, and confidence. We offer opportunities for team members to step up in their roles, taking on additional responsibilities and receiving appropriate wages in return. We also provide opportunities for young people (aged 16 +) to work with us to gain paid kitchen and waiting experience and provide references for them if requested.

Although the team is not required to disclose information about disability, ethnicity, mental health, or similar personal details, it is acknowledged that our team consists of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, including neurodivergent people, lone parents, young people, and those from minority ethnic communities. Flexible working arrangements and reasonable adjustments are always considered to ensure that the business benefits from the widest talent pool gained through a staff team with diverse lived experiences.

#### **4. Social & Charitable Support**

The Bennett & Friends team have community spirit at their heart and support and carry out charitable activities outside of the company as well as actively seeking opportunities to support local and national charities through the business. We are proud to support and work with national organisations such as Born Free, Freedom from Torture, Action Aid and Meningitis Now. We offer charities a discount of between 5% and 50% and free advice and support in the lead up to and on the day of their events where required.

#### **5. Health & Safety**

##### **5.1 Food Hygiene**

We ensure that all our catering services meet the highest standards of food safety and hygiene. Our kitchen retained, for the third year running, a food standard rating of 5 stars with the local authority environmental health officers. We comply with all relevant health and safety regulations and train our staff regularly to ensure safe and healthy food handling. Chefs and managers are trained to Level 3 Food Safety and all food handlers to Level 2 Food Safety. Regular audits and spot checks are conducted, by members of the management team.

##### **5.2 Workplace Safety**

We carry out risk assessments for each event to ensure the team are able to carry out

their roles in a safe environment, with appropriate equipment and training. The team are briefed at the beginning of the shift on any issues identified in the risk assessment together with identifying any emergency protocols the venue has in place for example with regards to fire-fighting equipment and emergency exits.

## **6. Monitoring & Reporting**

We will regularly review and monitor our CSR practices against this policy to ensure we are on track, to identify how to improve, and include new opportunities.

## **7. Conclusion**

Bennett & Friends are committed to making a positive impact through our catering services and will continue to uphold these principles and strive for continual improvement in all areas of our social responsibility.

**Date of Review: July 2025**