

# Website Carbon Emissions Report

Top 200 UK Law Firms

Q2 2024

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**TBD**

# FOREWORD BY SIMON MARSHALL

## CEO, TBD MARKETING

Welcome to the second edition of our Website Carbon Emissions Report for law firms. The first report – published in Q1 2024 – captured the imagination of quite a few law firms and their web agencies. We hope that this momentum will continue with the publication of this second edition as we collectively aim for net zero.

We have calculated our findings slightly differently this time around, the assumptions we used are set out below.

### Assumptions

- We based our top 200 UK law firm list on The Lawyer's most recent top 200 report.
- We then analysed each firm's main domain home page to establish their carbon findings using [websitecarbon.com](https://www.websitecarbon.com).
- We used the main domain to get estimated website volumes from [ahrefs.com](https://ahrefs.com) (AHREFS).
- Employee numbers are taken from LinkedIn as most employees are on there now.

### Challenges

One firm (CMS) blocks AHREFS, so we have estimated its traffic based on its competitor group. All firms' actual carbon emissions for their websites are likely to be worse, given that traffic levels are often higher than AHREFS estimates.

Allen & Overy moved on LinkedIn to A&O Shearman, which means that its employee figures may rise further as more people add themselves to the new LinkedIn account.

That would see their emissions per employee drop. It also has a new domain - so we have compared the new domain performance in Q2 to the old A&O domain in Q1 and ignored the prior Shearman domain.

AHREFS looks like it has underestimated A&O's traffic, but we have to go with the independent published figures. Using the home page doesn't allow for the majority of pages, which are often more energy efficient. But we have to start somewhere, and we don't have access to every firm's analytics, which would help us estimate carbon emissions better.

### Exclusions

If you're not in the top 200 and would like us to evaluate your firm, please email us and we'll include you.

If you're in the top 200 and want to know how you rank against your competitor group, please email us and we can look into creating you a bespoke report



# KEY FINDINGS

## Which firms have seen their emissions worsen this quarter?

Our research this quarter shows that overall, seven firms have seen a decline in their carbon ratings compared to the data in our inaugural report;

they are:

- A&O Shearman
- Brachers
- Charles Russell Speechlys
- Drydensfairfax Solicitors
- Shoosmiths
- Stephens Scown
- Walker Morris

The worst performer in this group is A&O Shearman. Their new, post-merger website has a far poorer carbon footprint rating than its predecessor, which has real-world effects on overall carbon output. The new domain currently is estimated as having lower levels of traffic, but it can only be a matter of time until it reaches its old traffic rankings and the total carbon emissions are doubled compared to the prior site. A missed opportunity, in our opinion.

Stephens Scown has made a major play of its ESG credentials - it is both a B Corp firm and is employee-owned - so it's disappointing to see the firm's website go backwards on carbon emissions.

## Are we making progress on using green energy to power law firms' websites?

No.

This quarter, we have made no progress on those law firms which use green energy to power their websites - it remains at 35% yes and 65% no. We do penalise in our scoring those who don't use green energy to power their web servers.

## Which firms' ratings remain the same?

The real issue is a lack of progress. Eighty firms with an F rating have not improved their position this past quarter. Improving by one energy emissions rating grade per quarter would make a huge difference in total emissions.

Overall, 109 firms with a rating of D to F have not improved their position over the past 12 weeks.

# KEY FINDINGS

## Which firms have seen their emissions improve this quarter?

### Improvements in Carbon Emissions Rating

Four firms improved their website carbon emission ratings compared to 12 weeks ago:

- Capsticks
- DWF
- Kingsley Napley
- Payne Hicks Beach

Payne Hicks Beach has improved its rating the most, moving from a C rating to a B rating. Kingsley Napley has moved off the bottom rung and, given the sheer volume of its website traffic, this has made a significant difference to its overall carbon emissions.

### Reductions in actual emissions

27 firms have dropped in total, but four stand out. Many of the 27 have lost website traffic, which is why their emissions are down slightly. But these four firms have all made energy rating improvements and saved almost a ton of emissions between them as a result:

- Brodies
- Clyde & Co
- Kingsley Napley
- Norton Rose Fulbright

Notably, Kingsley Napley has almost halved its emissions, dropping 48.4% this past quarter.

The more successful your website is, the more carbon you emit. So it's even more important to have a better carbon rating if your website has more traffic, as 100,000 page views at 0.31g per page is worse overall for emissions than a site with 1,000 page views at 30g per page. This is particularly acute at the top ten firms, which draw in a disproportionate volume of traffic.

### Emissions per employee improvement

The majority of improvements in emissions per employee are caused by mergers or by more employees adding themselves to the firm's account on LinkedIn. But there are a few exceptions, including Kingsley Napley, Thackray Williams, Brodies and Stewarts.

# METHODOLOGY

## **How do we calculate our scores for law firm website emissions?**

Here's the conundrum: we want to rank the top 200 firms for their website carbon emissions. Larger firms emit more, as they get more web traffic. So if we preference smaller firms, then we only really laud those with less web traffic.

Here's how we struck the balance: big firms do pollute more, and we did want to bring attention to that, so we do print that overall emissions table – but we don't use it in our rankings.

Instead, we use a combination of two scores to rank firms:

1. Adjusted overall emissions, allowing for green fuel and energy efficiency rating
2. Average pollution per employee

We weighted the scores in the ratio of one times adjusted emissions and five times average emissions per employee.

The net result is that when we group firms by revenues (a rough proxy for size and web traffic) across the top 200, the average ranking for each group now ranges from 87 to 108 – so a fair distribution.

If you want to really get to grips with the detail, then you need to look into your firm's grouping and compare your performance against firms of a similar size. We can run dedicated reports for your firm if you contact us.

# A FOCUS ON THE TOP TEN LARGEST FIRMS

## **The top ten UK law firms by revenue**

The top ten UK firms tend to have more traffic driven to their websites.

Some of their web agencies wrote to us complain that our first report disproportionately affected these firms. Yes, but it's also true that their emissions disproportionately affect the planet, hence our new scoring system to balance things out a little (see prior page).

But be under no illusion: the overall emissions table is one that these major firms need to crack, because:

1. They rank the worst on average for their carbon rating score, with the average top ten firm being between an E and an F, below the other groups; and
2. The majority of this group of firms still don't use green energy to power their web servers. A simple change here would make all the difference.

If those firms improved their energy efficiency ratings to an A+, then they would move on average from 97th on our list to an average of 58th, the best group ranking.

In our view, the pleadings from web agencies are really based on one simple fact: these agencies built sites that consume too much energy. That's what needs tackling.

Among the top 10 firms, only Linklaters rates at a B (the rest are D and below) and rightly takes its place at the top of this group table.

Under half of these firms are using green energy to power their web servers. Again, if they all went green, this would result in a major improvement in their scores.



## All Firms' Overall Emissions Stats

	<b>Firm</b>	<b>Q2 Carbon Emissions Rating</b>	<b>Q2 Kilograms of CO2 Per Year</b> ▾	<b>Q2 offset trees per year</b>
1.	Hogan Lovells	F	3,178.0	1,589.0
2.	Womble Bond Dickinson	F	2,676.0	1,338.0
3.	Norton Rose Fulbright	F	1,559.0	779.5
4.	Thompsons	F	1,200.9	600.4
5.	Addleshaw Goddard	F	1,152.6	576.3
6.	DLA Piper	F	1,070.6	535.3
7.	Clifford Chance	F	827.2	413.6
8.	Bird & Bird	F	762.2	381.1
9.	Wright Hassall	F	728.6	364.3
10.	Clyde & Co	F	722.7	361.4



## All Firms' Adjusted Overall Emissions Stats

	<b>Firm</b>	<b>Q2 Carbon Rating</b>	<b>Q2 Adjusted KG CO2 Overall Emissions</b> ▾	<b>Q2 Offset Trees Per Year</b>
1.	Hogan Lovells	F	3,178.0	1,589.0
2.	Womble Bond Dickinson	F	2,007.0	1,338.0
3.	Norton Rose Fulbright	F	1,559.0	779.5
4.	Thompsons	F	1,200.9	600.4
5.	Addleshaw Goddard	F	864.4	576.3
6.	Clifford Chance	F	827.2	413.6
7.	DLA Piper	F	803.0	535.3
8.	Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer	F	691.8	345.9
9.	Herbert Smith Freehills	F	660.2	330.1
10.	Bird & Bird	F	571.6	381.1





## CO2 Emissions Per Year Per Employee

	<b>Firm</b>	<b>Q2 Kilograms of CO2 Per Year</b>	<b>Q2 Employees</b>	<b>Q2 Carbon KG Emissions Per Employee ▾</b>
1.	Wright Hassall	728.57	236	3.09
2.	Womble Bond Dickinson	2,676.01	1,013	2.64
3.	Thompsons	1,200.87	668	1.80
4.	Lindsays	39.12	25	1.56
5.	Clarion	331.73	312	1.06
6.	Thomson Snell & Passmore	285.8	278	1.03
7.	Lee & Thompson	115.6	113	1.02
8.	Collyer Bristow	155.87	154	1.01
9.	Blacks	174.62	183	0.95
10.	Fladgate	379.54	398	0.95



## Biggest Rise in Emissions Per Employee This Quarter

	<b>Firm</b>	<b>Rise in Emissions Per Employee vs Last Quarter ▾</b>	<b>Rise in Total Emissions This Past Quarter</b>
1.	Bates Wells	477.1%	482.1%
2.	Charles Russell Speechlys	210.3%	219.4%
3.	Hogan Lovells	161.5%	168.1%
4.	A&O Shearman	155.7%	230.0%
5.	Womble Bond Dickinson	112.4%	111.7%
6.	Joseph Hage Aaronson	66.8%	64.4%
7.	Birketts	37.2%	40.0%
8.	Thompsons	32.5%	34.8%
9.	Howard Kennedy	25.0%	25.0%
10.	Stephens Scown	22.1%	24.2%



## Biggest Rise in Total Emissions This Quarter (Annualised)

	<b>Firm</b>	<b>Additional KGs of Emissions</b> ▾	<b>Additional KG of Emissions (%)</b>
1.	Hogan Lovells	1,992.6	168.1%
2.	Womble Bond Dickinson	1,412.2	111.7%
3.	Thompsons	309.8	34.8%
4.	A&O Shearman	159.1	230.0%
5.	Charles Russell Speechlys	99.3	219.4%
6.	Birketts	65.0	40.0%
7.	Lanyon Bowdler	29.2	20.8%
8.	Fieldfisher	21.3	15.4%
9.	Joseph Hage Aaronson	19.6	64.4%
10.	Shoosmiths	18.8	19.8%



## Biggest Fall in Emissions Per Employee This Quarter

	<b>Firm</b>	<b>Fall in Emissions Per Employee vs Last Quarter ^</b>	<b>Fall in Total Emissions This Past Quarter</b>
1.	Kingsley Napley	-48.6%	-48.4%
2.	Cripps	-45.4%	-39.3%
3.	Thackray Williams	-35.4%	-37.3%
4.	Taylor Rose MW	-34.3%	-33.9%
5.	Brodies	-33.5%	-31.9%
6.	EMW LAW	-31.2%	-31.2%
7.	Clyde & Co	-28.8%	-27.6%
8.	Dutton Gregory	-28.1%	-26.4%
9.	Stewarts	-27.8%	-27.8%
10.	AWH Solicitors	-27.1%	-29.7%



## Biggest Fall in Total Emissions This Quarter (Annualised)

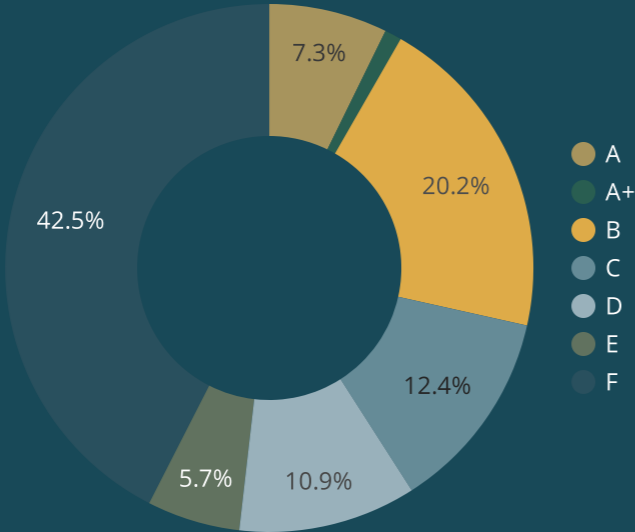
	<b>Firm</b>	<b>Additional KGs of Emissions ▲</b>	<b>Additional KGs of Emissions (%)</b>
1.	Clyde & Co	-275.6	-27.6%
2.	Kingsley Napley	-227.9	-48.4%
3.	Brodies	-208.3	-31.9%
4.	Norton Rose Fulbright	-137.3	-8.1%
5.	Taylor Rose MW	-41.0	-33.9%
6.	Cripps	-37.9	-39.3%
7.	DWF	-22.2	-22.1%
8.	Keystone Law	-19.7	-5.4%
9.	DAS Law	-16.8	-13.6%
10.	Bird & Bird	-16.5	-2.1%



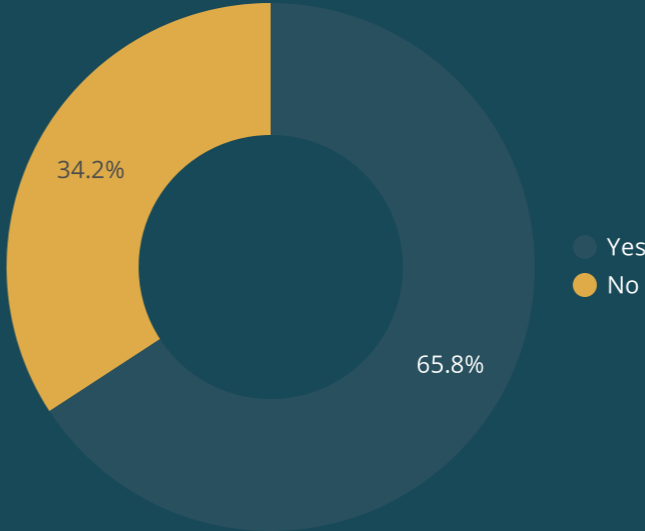
# % Green Energy & Ratings

No additional firms have taken to using green energy to deliver their web traffic over the past quarter. Almost half of all top 200 law firms' carbon ratings remain stubbornly an E or an F rating.

Overall firm ratings



Using green energy?





## Key stats for context

### Stats/Info:

- Websites contribute significantly to carbon emissions through their energy consumption and hosting infrastructure.
- "The IT sector already consumes an estimated 7% of global electricity" - Greenpeace.
- "The communications industry could use 20% of all the world's electricity by 2025" - Climate Hot News.
- Firms won't reach their net zero goals unless this is tackled.
- Websites have traditionally been a blind spot (because they are down the supply chain), but we are increasingly seeing decarbonisation built into the pitch process.
- Offsetting is a short-term option for firms that don't want to go through a whole rebuild
- But factoring in lower-impact builds from the outset is the best option.
- Coincidentally, Google prefers these pages and so you'll improve both the environment and your SEO by reducing page size.

# How do **your** rankings stack up?

Want to know how you're doing compared to your peers? Buy a personalised report showing your stats against five of your competitors.

Or, if your firm isn't listed, find out where you would rank against the Top 200.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

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