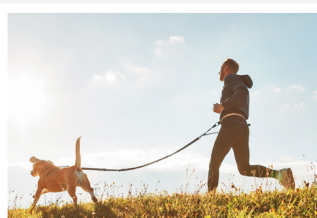


# Sustainability and Giving Back Report 2022



IT'S TIME TO  
THINK ABOUT

Energy  
Efficiency



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## Introduction

Last year we published our first progress update since the launch of our Sustainability and Giving Back strategy. In this second update we're once again celebrating the amazing achievements of our family of businesses, and holding ourselves to account by reviewing our targets and reporting our progress on them. In our 2021 review we increased the ambition for two of our targets, and this year we've increased the ambition for one more. We're currently on track to achieve or exceed 18 of our 21 targets.

This year our practices' engagement with sustainability continued to grow, as the number working towards an Investors in the Environment accreditation more than doubled. Our contribution to sustainability in the veterinary sector was recognised with two Investors in the Environment award nominations, and a growing number of VetPartners colleagues joined industry working groups on sustainability.

The power of collaboration was also in evidence, as our anaesthesia Clinical Interest Group worked in partnership with the Sustainability team on a campaign to reduce the environmental impacts of anaesthesia; and Ash Tree Vets, our Clinical Board and the Sustainability team were awarded a grant for research spanning environmental and clinical concerns. You can read about these and our other achievements on page 3.

Giving back to the local and global community is hugely important to VetPartners, and 2022's total raised for charities was £150,002: over triple the total from 2021. In recognition of our colleagues' commitment to good causes, in Spring 2022 we introduced a donation matching scheme - matching donations from our businesses' fundraising events up to 100%. As usual, colleagues participated in a hugely creative range of events, including skydives, raffles, marathons, obstacle courses, squat and press-up challenges, puppy shows and even hair donation. Find out more about this - and about colleagues' volunteering efforts - on pages 4 and 5.

### A note from Jo:

*"In the face of the political and economic turmoil of 2022, VetPartners colleagues' commitment and generosity has only increased. It's inspiring to see the passion our family of businesses has for giving back: from global causes like the Ukraine appeals and the World Land Trust, to their local community organisations supporting people and animals. As we move into 2023, sustainability is becoming an increasingly important feature of conversations around the future of the profession. I'm proud of VetPartners' continuing commitment to protecting the environment: both through our own actions and through our contributions to the joint efforts of our sector."*



Jo Malone | VetPartners CEO



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## Sustainability highlights

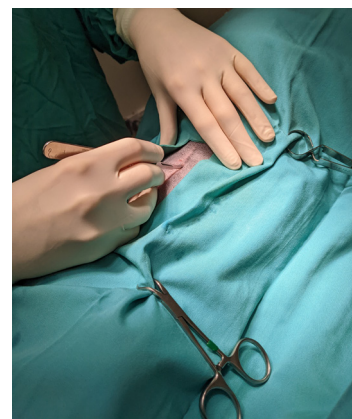
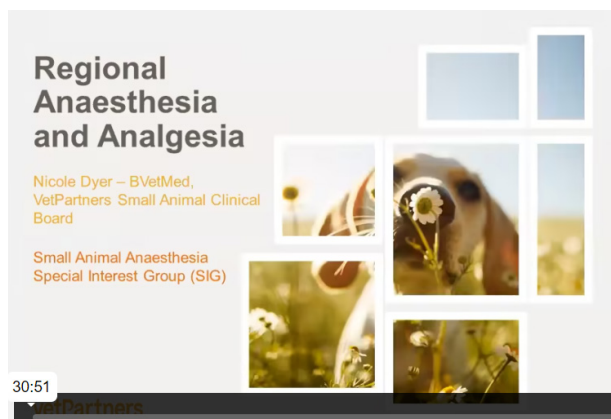
VetPartners continued in partnership with environmental accreditation scheme Investors in the Environment (iE), offering discounted memberships to our practices. 15 practices signed up with iE in 2022, Minster Veterinary Practice was our first practice to achieve the highest Green accreditation, and five members achieved Bronze, including our central support office.

We also received two nominations in iE's annual awards: Ash Tree Vets for 'Best Newcomer', and VetPartners as a whole for 'Sustainability Influencer.'

Practices continued to recycle the 'unrecyclable' with TerraCycle, saving 5.6 tonnes of PPE, plastic packaging and blister packs from landfill.



We continued adding to our online sustainability learning resources, available to all colleagues, with case studies from practices and webinars going into more depth on certain topics. In collaboration with the Clinical Board and Anaesthesia Clinical Interest Group, we ran a campaign on reducing the environmental impacts of anaesthesia – including a series of webinars, reference guides, and a commitment to phase out the use of nitrous oxide across the group. Over 99% of VetPartners practices now do not use nitrous oxide: the most environmentally harmful veterinary inhaled anaesthetic agent.



In October VetPartners were awarded a BSAVA Petsavers grant for a project proposed in collaboration between Ash Tree Vets, the Sustainability team and the Clinical Board team. Project DRAPES (Drapes in Routine Aseptic Procedures for Environmental Sustainability) will involve up to ten VetPartners practices and aims to compare wound complication rates between patients where reusable textile drapes have been used and those where disposable drapes have been used. This will provide an evidence base for veterinary surgeons in practice to make positive sustainability choices without compromising patient outcomes.

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## Giving back highlights

In Spring 2022 we launched our donation matching scheme: pledging to match fundraising by our colleagues for registered charities up to 100%. This hugely increased our collective giving, and we ended the year having raised £150,002.53 for charity. £33,430.31 of this was for our chosen charity of 2022, Cinnamon Trust.



“

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*What a fantastic result from all the hard-working colleagues at VetPartners across the UK who have excelled at their fundraising efforts for us. We were so delighted to see what everyone has been up to, from scaling mountains, cake sales and selling Christmas cards. Thank you from everyone at The Cinnamon Trust and a massive thank you from all the pets that we care for too. VetPartners people are remarkable!*

*Cinnamon Trust CEO (interim) Patrick Williams*

Over £20,000 of the grand total went to our appeal for Ukraine, with colleagues and clients coming together to support the relief efforts of International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC). Practice teams also arranged the collection of vital supplies to help the people of Ukraine. Bourton Vale Equine Clinic arranged for donations of clothing, toiletries, and food to be taken to Poland to help Ukrainian refugees crossing the border to safety, and VetPartners provided £3,600 to pay for three lorries to transport the much-needed supplies. Practices also collected more than 600 pet carriers for transport to Poland by MWI Animal Health, to meet the needs of refugees bringing their pets with them.

In September we launched our partnership with the World Land Trust: an international conservation charity that protects the world's most threatened habitats and species. We pledged to support the organisation's Buy an Acre and Plant a Tree programmes for at least five years, and rather than asking colleagues to fundraise, we 'sponsor' engagement, team building and wellbeing activities with donations.



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Donations to World Land Trust kicked off in October, as colleagues from across the UK and Europe participated in a 'Month of Movement', with VetPartners donating money for every 10 minutes of activity. Over £12,000 was donated to World Land Trust, and the same amount to Vetlife – a charity providing support to veterinary professionals in the UK. October also saw us celebrate VetPartners' 7th anniversary with a donation to Nature's SAFE: an organisation helping to safeguard the future of animals at risk of extinction. Our £5,000 donation was enough to preserve one species through the charity's cryoconservation process.



Donating money isn't the only way to give back, so we started offering all colleagues a paid day off every year for the purpose of volunteering. People gave their time to a huge variety of causes, including pro bono work for StreetVet and Dogs on the Streets, food bank collecting and coordination, inspiring future generations of vets and RVNs with talks in schools, and several team litterpicks during the Great British Spring Clean in March.



Toward the end of the year, all colleagues had the chance to vote for our 2023 charity of the year. The chosen cause was Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust: a small charity working to alleviate rural poverty and improve animal welfare in The Gambia.

## Our targets: how are we doing?

In our first Sustainability Strategy in 2020 we set ourselves 21 targets for sustainability and giving back, covering the period until the end of 2026, and our three guiding themes: 'We are ethical', 'We are resilient', 'We are champions'.

We've reviewed our progress against these targets to see where we're on track, where we could do better, and where we've exceeded our ambitions. We've also reviewed the targets themselves to check they're still relevant and helpful.



### We are ethical

Target: "By the end of 2026..."	Progress	At a glance
90% of practices will be on renewable energy tariffs	<p>80% of our metered sites are currently on fully renewable electricity tariffs.</p> <p>Although this percentage is lower than reported last year, we have in fact moved more of our sites to renewable tariffs in 2022. As we've substantially improved our monitoring of energy contracts at our sites, and partnered with new practices, the overall proportion has reduced. We will continue to move onto renewable tariffs as existing non-renewable contracts expire.</p> <p>(In our 2021 review this target was increased from 50% to over 90% of sites on renewable energy tariffs).</p>	On track
We will know the carbon footprint of VetPartners and set carbon reduction targets for 2026 and 2030	<p>We are continuing to improve our understanding of our energy consumption: in 2022 gas invoice data were available for 84% of our sites, and electricity invoice data for 69% of our sites; up from 16% and 23% respectively in 2021.</p> <p>However, we did not meet our aim of setting carbon reduction targets in 2022. An increase in team capacity in April will allow us to focus on achieving this in 2023 and we are confident in being able to set specific targets in 2023-24.</p>	Off track
We will implement at least three ways to encourage or reward colleagues for positive environmental or social actions	<p><u>2022 update:</u> In Spring 2022 we launched our donation matching scheme: pledging to match fundraising by our colleagues for registered charities up to 100%.</p> <p>Through our corporate membership with Investors in the Environment (iE), we subsidised iE membership for 29 of our companies in 2022.</p> <p><u>Previous years:</u> We set up a monthly prize draw for companies who tell us about Giving Back activities they've run.</p> <p>We published the VetPartners Giving Back Guide: a comprehensive resource to help colleagues find answers and inspiration about charity activities.</p>	Achieved

Target: “By the end of 2026...”	Progress	At a glance
We will make VetPartners sustainability resources available to all colleagues	<p><u>2022 update:</u> We continued to update the VetPartners Sustainability Guide, and added new practice case studies and recorded webinars.</p> <p><u>Previous years:</u> We published the VetPartners Sustainability Guide on our e-learning platform: accessible to all colleagues. The guide covers all aspects of sustainability, with information specifically tailored for veterinary practices and VetPartners businesses. The content is expanded and updated on a regular basis by the Sustainability team.</p>	Achieved
<p>We will: deliver at least 10 hours of training and CPD to colleagues on sustainability per year</p> <p>and</p> <p>create role-specific training in sustainability and make it available to all new starters with VetPartners</p>	<p>In 2022 we delivered 6.5 hours of webinars relating to sustainability, including a series on reducing the environmental impacts of anaesthesia, developed in collaboration with the Clinical Board Anaesthesia Clinical Interest Group. We also screened two films on environmental themes, with a combined duration of over 2.5 hours.</p> <p>164 colleagues enrolled onto the sustainability resources section on VetPartners Learning.</p> <p>(In 2021 this target changed from “we will achieve the Surfers Against Sewage ‘Plastic Free’ award in 10% of practices”).</p>	On track
We will implement additional measures to reduce the use of and escape of anaesthetic greenhouse gases in 20% of practices	<p>In collaboration with the Clinical Board and Anaesthesia Clinical Interest Group, we ran a campaign on reducing the environmental impacts of anaesthesia – including a series of webinars, reference guides, and a commitment to phase out the use of nitrous oxide across the group. Over 99% of VetPartners practices now do not use nitrous oxide.</p>	On track
We will develop a code of conduct for our suppliers on environmental and human rights and engage with all our tier one suppliers to ensure they abide by it	<p>We didn’t make as much progress on this target in 2022 as we would have liked. However, a new member of the sustainability team has recently been recruited, whose first remit will be to focus on this target. We are confident of being able to achieve this prior to 2026.</p>	On track



## We are resilient

Target: "By the end of 2026..."	Progress	At a glance
We will be diverting 90% of our waste from landfill	<p>In 2022 we recycled 5.6 tonnes of PPE, plastic film, pet food pouches and medication blister packs through TerraCycle: an increase of 0.4 tonnes on 2021. Normally not recycled, our investment in TerraCycle Zero Waste Boxes for our practices allowed us to give these materials a second life rather than sending them to landfill or incineration.</p> <p>VetPartners' Procurement Team has been consulting with nationwide waste brokers, collaborating with the Sustainability Team, to investigate whether a group-wide contract would allow better monitoring of waste volumes, and lead to more diversion from landfill.</p> <p>Challenges remain for many non-replaceable clinical waste streams for which landfilling is the only current option.</p>	Off track
We will reduce our energy use by 20% (on a per practice basis) compared with 2021	<p>Electricity use in our businesses decreased by 14% in the 2021-22 financial year, compared with the 2020-21 financial year. However a slight increase in gas use and a large increase in the use of transport fuels means that energy use per practice slightly increased overall.</p> <p>Far more invoices were available for 2021 - 22 compared to the 2020 - 21 report, which may account for some of the increase in calculated total energy consumption. Many sites were partially occupied or closed during 2020 and early 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which may account for the sharp increase in transport fuel use in 2021-22.</p> <p>In Autumn 2022 we began the process of installing automatic meter reading technology to allow more accurate monitoring of energy use and highlight where intervention would be most effective. We have also commenced a series of site energy audits with our energy consultants, to help us identify and implement energy efficiency measures across our estate.</p>	Off track



Target: “By the end of 2026...”	Progress	At a glance
We will install water saving measures in 30% of practices	<p>In 2022 we continued to work with the consultancy Waterscan to more accurately track our consumption, and use the data to quickly identify and fix leaks.</p> <p>Next steps will focus on communicating with practices and investigating how we can help them to reduce water consumption through a mix of education and technology.</p>	On track
We will help 70% of our business conduct a personalised waste review: finding opportunities to minimise waste volumes and optimise waste management in their practices	<p>In 2022 we completed a comprehensive review of waste regulations in the UK which affect our practices. We started developing training materials for our in-house Health and Safety Audit team to help them include basic waste reviews in health and safety audits: work which is continuing into 2023.</p> <p>In late 2022 we also liaised with veterinary surgeon colleagues with an interest in sustainability, to discuss how to provide advice to a diverse range of sites with varying challenges. This work will continue in 2023.</p> <p>(In 2021 this target changed from “we will achieve the Surfers Against Sewage ‘Plastic Free’ award in 10% of practices”, to “we will help 70% of our business conduct a personalised waste review: finding opportunities to minimise waste volumes and optimise waste management in their practices”).</p>	Achieved
We will review and update the sustainability strategy annually	In December 2022 the sustainability team reviewed all of the targets and the progress we’ve made against them, with the results reported in this document.	On track
We will include environmental and social risks in the company risk register	In March 2021 the VetPartners risk register was reviewed and updated, and now includes environmental and social risks.	Achieved
We will establish a regular review process for environmental and social risks, and include mitigating actions in updates to the sustainability strategy and action plan	The first annual review of the company risk register took place in March 2022 incorporating input from the sustainability team on environmental and social risks.	On track



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## We are champions

Target: "By the end of 2026..."	Progress	At a glance
We will achieve the Investors in the Environment (iE) Green level award at central support office, and at least Bronze level at 25% of practices	<p>29 of our practices (18%) are working towards an iE award: an increase from 9% last year. By the end of 2022, five had achieved Bronze and one had achieved Green.</p> <p>The central support office achieved the Bronze award in 2022 and is now working towards Silver.</p> <p>In 2022 the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons announced the introduction of a Sustainability Award to their Practice Standards Scheme (PSS). We are now supporting practices to choose either the PSS Sustainability Award or the iE scheme (or both), and have produced a new set of supporting resources for the PSS award to add to our existing iE resources.</p> <p><b>This target has been changed to: achieve the iE Green level award at central support office, and at least iE Bronze level or the PSS Environmental Sustainability award at 25% of practices.</b></p> <p>(In 2021 this target was increased to aim for the iE Bronze award at at least 25% of practices, up from the 15% target originally set).</p>	On track Target changed
We will publish an annual sustainability/CSR report	This is our second Sustainability and Giving Back report, and we plan to continue publishing them annually.	On track
We will establish a sustainability in farming working group	<p>The formation of the Sustainability in Farming group formed in 2021 and delivered webinars and discussion evenings for colleagues on sustainable farming topics.</p> <p>In 2022 our research consultancy Kingshay collaborated with the Sustainability team to add sustainability training materials to their DigiFarm package, and published insights and training materials on related topics including sustainable parasite control, soil health and minimising waste.</p>	On track
We will take action for wildlife and nature on site in at least 25% of our businesses	<p>In 2022 colleagues from all over the VetPartners group participated in activities including a 'Month of Movement', resulting in £14,290 being donated to World Land Trust.</p> <p>In future years in addition to fundraising for World Land Trust, we will explore how to help our businesses help nature on their sites.</p> <p>(In our 2021 review this target was changed from "we will implement biodiversity action plans at 10% of our farm and equine practices").</p>	On track

Target: “By the end of 2026...”	Progress	At a glance
We will establish partnerships with industry groups and other organisations, helping to promote best practice for sustainability in the veterinary and farming sectors	<p>This year VetPartners colleagues participated in the consultation on the new sustainability requirements for the Practice Standards Scheme (RCVS) and spoke about sustainability at the BVNA annual congress.</p> <p>VetPartners colleagues are also represented on BEVA's Sustainability working group, and in an informal working group of sustainability professionals from the veterinary Major Employers Group.</p> <p>Colleagues from Ash Tree Vets and the Clinical Board and Sustainability teams were awarded a BSAVA Petsavers grant to research the impact of reusable drapes on post-operative wound complications. As in previous years, several of our vets and nurses are members of VetSustain working groups, or are recognised as VetSustain ‘champions’.</p>	On track
We will collectively volunteer 5,000 hours per year	<p>Colleagues volunteered for a large number of causes in 2022, some on two week visits abroad, some regularly in their spare time, and many using the extra paid day of leave for volunteering made available to all colleagues from this year.</p> <p>Accurately monitoring how many days have been volunteered is currently challenging since many practices’ HR systems are not centralised, and don’t capture days taken for volunteering. The monthly survey remains popular, but is not capturing all volunteering.</p> <p>In 2023 we will continue to support colleagues to volunteer by communicating about the paid day of leave, highlighting opportunities for veterinary professionals, and celebrating examples of colleagues’ volunteering on our intranet and in our internal newsletter.</p>	On track
We will raise £50,000 for charity per year	<p>In 2022 we raised over £150,000 for a wide range of charities.</p> <p><b>This target has been increased to “We will raise at least £150,000 for charity per year”.</b></p>	On track Increased



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