

SUSTAINABLE

William Smith Group

ESG REPORT

**WILLIAM
SMITH**
GROUP 1832



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OUR ESG COMMITMENTS

Sustainability is embedded in everything we do at William Smith Group 1832. From eco-friendly manufacturing to the wellbeing of our people, we ensure our actions make a lasting positive impact. Our carbon neutral certification, industry awards, and gold-standard accreditations prove that when it comes to ESG, we deliver – not just promise.

OUR INITIATIVES

A CARBON NEUTRAL BUSINESS

We are a proudly certified carbon neutral business (awarded by Blue Marble Standards in September 2023 & 2024) achieving that gold standard across our global operations – a process achieved through rigorous analysis, targeted carbon reduction strategies, and collaborations with key partners.

In its certification, Blue Marble Standards noted that “William Smith is committed to identifying and implementing carbon saving projects”.

Initiatives include embracing eco-friendly LED lighting throughout the business, implementing a ‘lights off’ policy to lower energy waste and also staging meetings online (when possible) to cut down on travel.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

The overwhelming majority of our in house packaging is recyclable, even the shrink wrap!

As a founding member and FESPA UK Waste Accreditation Champion, this not-for-profit association exists to provide a recycling scheme for our customers, that will dispose of graphic waste using the most responsible methods. Helping to reduce the environmental impact of self-adhesive films and backing paper waste all across the UK for the sign and graphics industry.



Statement:

“For over 190 years, William Smith Group 1832 has evolved with the times while staying true to our values. Today, ESG is part of how we carry that legacy forward – acting with care for our environment, investing in our people, and running our business responsibly.”

“We’re working to reduce our environmental footprint, build a workplace that supports every individual, and maintain strong governance throughout all areas of the business. This is not about trend-following – it’s about doing what’s right for the long-term, in a way that honours our history and strengthens our future.”

OUR CULTURE



Giving Back: We work across our community to help it grow. Our family-run business has been here for seven generations, and we are a major local employer – so it is only right we give back, and at William Smith, we support everything from grassroots sport to charities that are close to our team’s hearts.



Caring for our people: Our team’s mental health and wellness are top priorities, and we provide them all with access to counselling, mindfulness training, and employee support programs to support them both in their roles but also with the day-to-day challenges of life.

Our workforce knows it is supported whatever challenges arise and be it long-term illness or personal issues, our colleagues can count on our support during their toughest times.



Investment: At William Smith, investment never ends. We created an App to act as a safe space for open feedback, which has a 76% engagement rate. Additionally, we invested £75k last year into schemes to improve learning and development, to retain and attract the best staff.



An envious workplace culture: We work hard but we also believe that work doesn’t have to be a chore. Our culture is a key driving force behind our impressive staff retention rates – and a reason why so many staff have been with us for decades.

Go-karting, golf, a day at the races, selfie stations, pizza Fridays and even cocktails at Christmas – fun is part of our fabric and we strive to get the balance right.

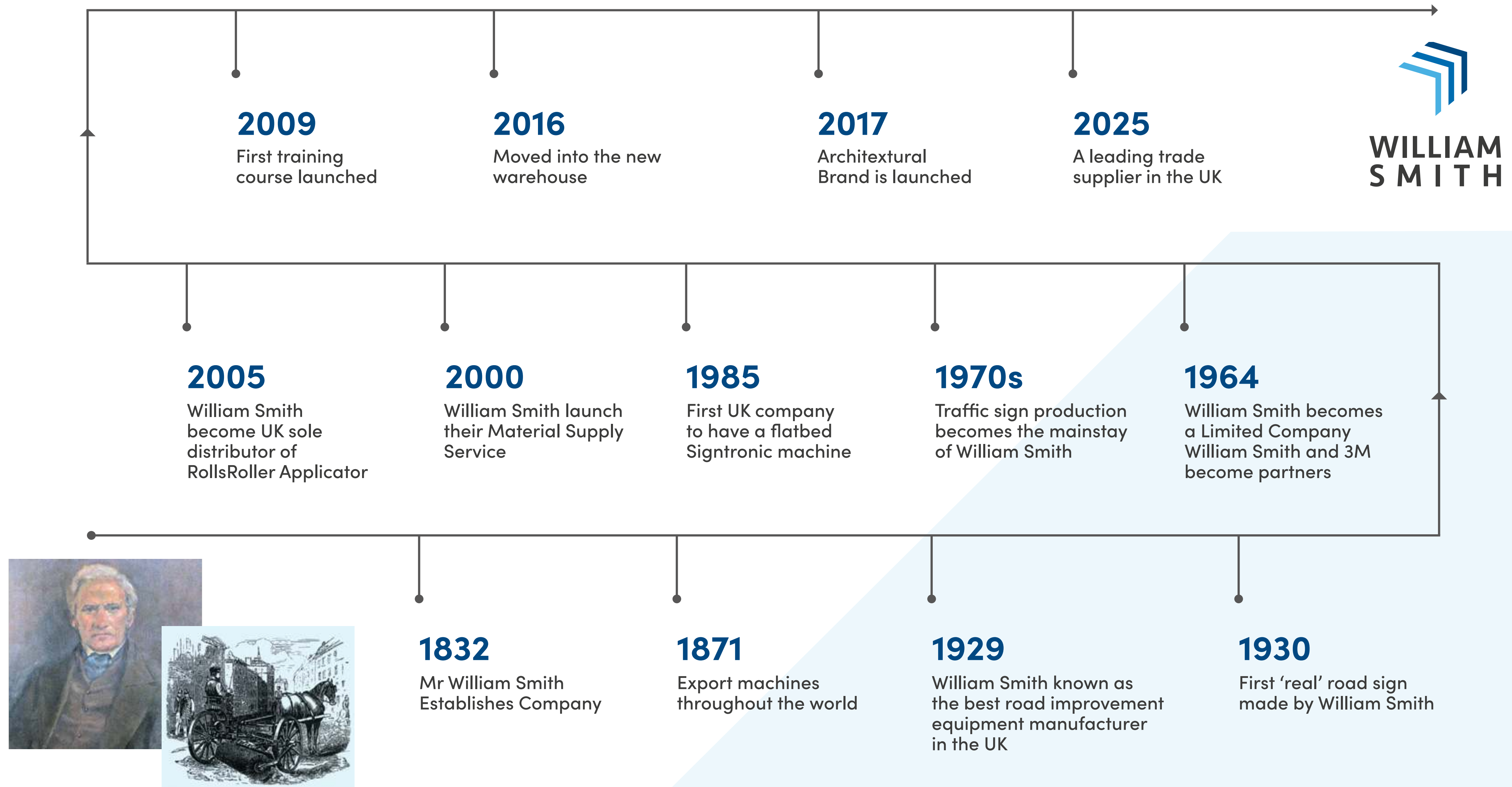


OUR HISTORY

Established in 1832, William Smith Group has been leading the signage and graphics industry for decades. Based in the County Durham town of Barnard Castle, we are proud to be Britain's oldest sign maker.

Our family-owned business is almost 200-years-old. Yet despite our age and experience, we never stop moving forward.

We're driven by innovation, quality, and responsibility—permanently pushing boundaries to deliver cutting-edge solutions with a sustainable edge.



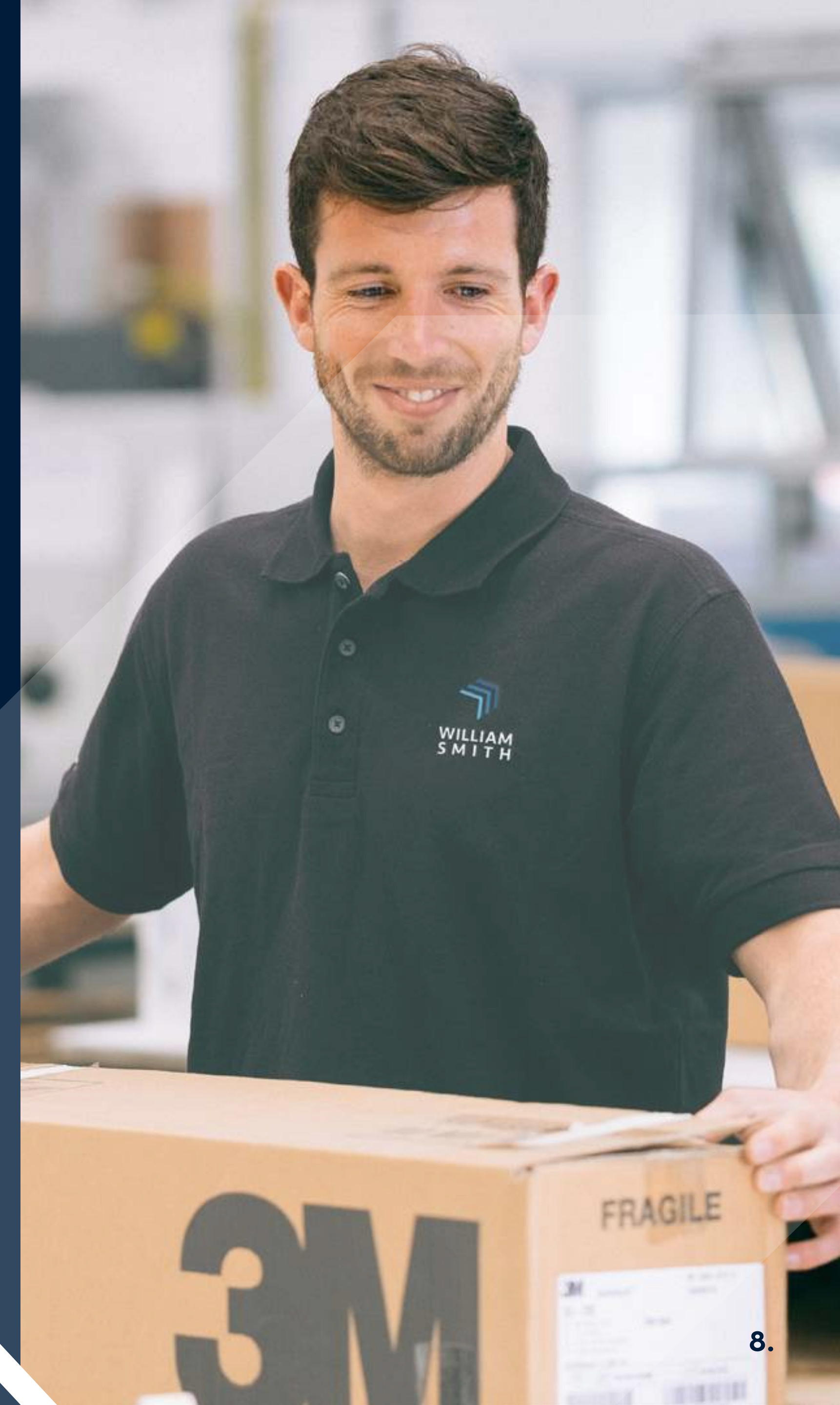
OUR MISSION

We aim to empower customers with products and services that drive their success. We believe in being proactive, forward-thinking and always customer-focused, delivering solutions that make things happen. Our commitment to high standards is matched by a people-first approach, treating everyone whether its customers or team members, like family.

That includes growing other businesses by partnering with them in order for them to best utilise our products.

Our Training Academy shows installers how to correctly apply products, with mentoring and guidance from industry-leading trainers, with architectural and vehicle wrapping courses available.

We empower customers with products, training, and service that drive success. Guided by high standards and a people-first approach, we partner with businesses to help them make the most of our solutions – from architectural wraps to specialist training – all delivered with the professionalism and warmth of a family business.



OUR VALUES

Building a **legacy** together

As a company of history, we pride ourselves on making a difference, of standing for something so much more.

Our purpose is not only to uphold that history, but to continue year on year, person by person, experience by experience to create a lasting legacy with everyone we interact with.

Make things ***happen***

We have a drive to move things forward and an appetite for growth and learning. We do what we say we will do.

You can expect to receive an outstanding service that is both friendly and professional, as we are committed to making things happen.

We strive to go the extra mile every time, keeping our customers at the heart of everything we do.

Encourage innovation

We're on the pulse with the latest industry offerings, meaning we have built a solid reputation for innovation.

We seek to improve in all that we do. We explore innovation and approach change with an openness and adaptability.

With knowledge comes growth, which we in turn share with you as our valued customers.

Treat everyone like family

As a family business, we have diversified in many different and unexpected ways. We're proud of our business and everyone that contributes to making it what it is. We have developed a community like no other.

We have a deep care and respect for everyone we work with, including customers and partners. Within our team, support and collaboration are at the core.

OUR BRANDS

ARCHITEXTURAL

Architextural provides innovative surface solutions, specialising in architectural finishes and refurbishment products. It stocks the largest range of architectural films in the UK.

That extensive range includes high-quality architectural films, vinyl wraps, and surface coatings designed to transform interiors and exteriors across various sectors, including commercial, retail, and residential spaces.

These enable clients to achieve aesthetically pleasing and durable finishes without the need for extensive renovations.



ARCHITEXTURAL™

Surface. Designed.

VION

Our exclusive brand, VION, offers a trusted range of self-adhesive films designed specifically for the sign and graphics trade.

From digital print films to architectural and window solutions, VION combines high-quality performance with everyday value. Developed with installers in mind, the range is backed by reliable lead times, straightforward application, and expert technical support from our in-house team.

Whether you're wrapping vehicles, refreshing interiors, or creating eye-catching displays, VION gives you the confidence to deliver — with products that work just as hard as you do. The perfect balance between technical performance and affordable pricing.

With sustainability in mind, PVC-free digital print options are offered, as well as films for interior wrapping to reuse or extend the life of existing fixtures and fittings.

VION®



THE VISUAL
ONE. THE
VIBRANT ONE.
THE VIVID
ONE. THE
VERSATILE
ONE. **VION.**
THE ONE.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

As a strategic business priority, ESG at William Smith is overseen at senior leadership level.

A standing agenda item at every board meeting, updates are fed back to the Managing Director and leadership team with progress permanently tracked. That's achieved by a cross-business ESG Steering Group – with representatives from HR, marketing and health & safety – meeting monthly to monitor performance and set priorities and KPIs.



ROB SMITH
Managing Director

Rob provides strategic leadership for our ESG vision, ensuring sustainability remains a core business priority. He aligns the organisation's goals, resources, and culture to deliver meaningful environmental, social, and governance outcomes, while driving long-term growth.



KELLY HUGHES
People & Culture Manager

Kelly champions our social sustainability agenda, driving initiatives that enhance employee wellbeing, foster continuous learning, and strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion. She also leads community engagement to ensure our business creates a positive impact.



LINDSAY HUTCHINSON
Head of Marketing

Lindsay ensures our sustainability commitments are clearly communicated and championed both internally and externally. She shapes brand strategy to align with ESG goals, building engagement and trust with customers, partners, and employees.



NICKY SMITH
Operations Manager

Nicky leads our environmental strategy, embedding resource efficiency, waste reduction, and process improvements across the business. Her work ensures sustainability is integrated into every operational decision, reducing our footprint while boosting efficiency.



ROB SISWICK
Production Manager

As our Health & Safety officer, Rob safeguards our people and processes by ensuring the highest safety standards and compliance. He drives continuous improvement in workplace safety and contributes to social and governance objectives, ensuring ESG principles are embedded in our production practices.



JONNY HARLE
Product & Portfolio Manager

Jonny develops and steers our product portfolio with a focus on sustainable innovation. He identifies and delivers market-ready solutions that reduce environmental impact and meet evolving customer demands for responsible products.

OUR COMMUNITY

As one of Barnard Castle's largest employers, we give back through sport, charity, and education. From funding a defibrillator for the town's Parkrun to supporting 180 young footballers, we invest where it matters most. Our partnerships with cancer and mental health charities, schools, and local colleges help our community grow stronger together.



*Testimonial from Darren Harrison,
coach for Under 11s football team :*

"I would like to thank William Smith for their continuous support for their continuous support and the wonderful donation they gave to Barnard Castle F.C.

We are a local football club with 180 children who play in a local Teesside league. We have a small team of volunteers who support the club, and without the kindness of William Smith would find it very difficult to keep up with the running of the club.

The money received helps us with strips, balls, training tops and many other things which clubs need. The 180 kids all proudly wear the strips with the William Smith logo on."

FUNDRAISING

Like many businesses, our team sadly has been impacted by cancer. That's why we've focussed on raising vital funds and awarenesses for two charities – Teesdale Cancer Research and Macmillan – who help those in our community fighting it.

As a company we have staged Macmillan Coffee mornings and also raised funds for Mental Health Awareness Week through sponsored walks. As a pillar of the Barnard Castle community for 200 years, we've also worked with local schools and have strong links with the local college which over the years, has helped with recruitment by helping leavers secure careers where they can grow.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

For 50 years, The Clique Charity has been an integral part of the Barnard Castle community, raising vital funds through innovative and fun ways to support both the town and the wider Teesdale area.

In that time, the charity has been incredibly close to our hearts and during the past half-a-century, 27 members of the charity have worked for us. Currently, four are employed at William Smith 1832.

We have produced everything from posters, banners and tickets for Clique events, while we have loaned out our vehicles to help their fundraising – be it transporting bikes for a coast-to-coast charity cycle or equipment and support for the Three Peaks challenge. Last year, we also sponsored the charity's annual It's a Knockout event.

THE CLIQUE CHARITY

Fund raising for the Community

Clique testimonial:

“Without this support that has stretched over generations of the Smith family we would not have been able to help our community in the way we do, thank you so much for your continued support”.



ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

As a manufacturer, we realise we have a duty to do as much as possible to offset the environmental impact of producing high-quality signage and vinyl materials.

Our environmental policy dictates that sustainable business practices are at the forefront of everything we do, whilst remaining compliant with both environmental laws and regulations.

One key achievement is becoming a carbon neutral business – something we've now achieved in consecutive years – and has been achieved by implementing several processes and innovations across the company.



OUR JOURNEY TO CARBON NEUTRAL

TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE'VE OFFSET:

586 tonnes of carbon

288 tonnes offset from company-controlled vehicles and on-site fuel use

651 different deliveries from William Smith's suppliers

22,552 litres of diesel offset from our on-site tank



BY WIPING OUT OVER **HALF A KILOTONNE** OF CARBON EMISSIONS, WE HELPED SAVE:

130 The equivalent to cancelling 130 return flights between London and New York

125 Removing 125 petrol cars from the UK's roads – the equivalent to 1.45m fewer miles driven

95 Enough energy to power 95 average UK homes for an entire year

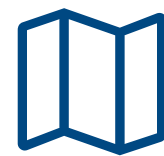
9700 The amount of CO² absorbed by 9,700 tree seedlings grown for 10 years.



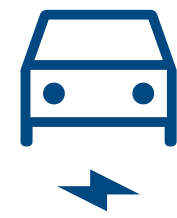
OUR MANUFACTURING PROCESS



We have used fully recyclable packaging whenever feasible, as well as committing to environmentally friendly practices such as using cardboard boxes that are FSC certified and cardboard end caps. We also provide PVC-Free products for the eco-conscious customer.



We have embraced technology to use the most eco-efficient delivery routes, while local deliveries are carried out every Thursday in order to minimise dependency on couriers. Additionally, weekly deliveries to the North West prevents multiple consignments being transported over several days – all steps that help lower the company's footprint.



Electric vehicles have been used for internal deliveries, while all our vehicles are 'low emission friendly' – meaning they are exempt from charges in high-emission zones. This ongoing work reflects our firm belief that businesses must play a vital, ongoing role in tackling climate change.



With solar panels installed across our Barnard Castle HQ, we are committed to finding sustainable ways of powering our business.



OUR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

We have implemented a wide range of sustainable practices designed to create as small a carbon footprint as possible.

The majority of our packaging consumables can be fully recycled. Packaging materials are made with a minimum of 30% of recyclable material and can be fully recycled in our waste systems, this includes lay flat tubing, poly bags, pallet wrap, hand wrap and bubble wrap.

And it isn't just plastics. Our corrugated packaging is sourced from forests managed to the FSC's high environmental and social practices. As a result, the paper and cardboard produced to package our products meets a far greener standard.

William Smith
SMITH
ARCHITEXTURAL

ROLLER
APPLICATOR



For the minimal amount of waste that unfortunately isn't suitable for recycling, we use professional and respected specialists to ensure it is safely and ethically removed.

Our composite scrap metal is collected by ASD and fully recycled. All of the production scrap grades that are collected from ASD Ltd are taken to our local metal recycling facility for further processing prior to re-melting and re-constituting into new products by a steelworks or Foundry either in the UK or overseas. We also partner with the award-winning Veolia – the UK leader in environmental waste solutions.

Their specialists take our general waste to Niramax, in Hartlepool, which is the closest suitable site to our headquarters. Any waste that can be recycled is separated at the Material Recycling Facility with the remainder processed on to RDF (Refuse Derived Fuel) – diverting it from landfill.

Additionally, the Veolia Customer Portal highlights the positive environmental impact this has in performance reports.

OUR PRODUCTS

At William Smith, our environmental policy dictates that when it comes to the products we make – and our supply chain – we will strive to consider eco-friendly materials, whether that is water based inks or PVC-free films – and work only with suppliers who adhere to the same environmental standards. We stock and supply numerous sustainable product ranges within our material supply service from key brands and partners.



3M innovations include the Envision collection is Greenguard Gold certified, to ensure low emission of volatile compounds into indoor environments. The latest product is also made with 4% bio-based materials

3M™ Sun Control Window Film reduces heat gain through window glass, meaning less air con is needed to cool a building, increasing energy efficiency. 3M DI-NOC recycled content collections are also made from 80% recycled polyester, with the other 20% made from scallop shell powders.



Arlon's Vital range comprises of PVC free solutions delivering superior quality and performance without compromising the planet. Arlon aim to reduce VOCs in their manufacturing processes by 57.1%, plasticizer free formulation and reduced environmental impact in landfills.



Avery Dennison also offers a sustainable print portfolio offering alternatives to PVC products, free of chlorine, phthalates or other halogens to reduce VOCs. Transparency is critical to create trust and build partnerships for a more sustainable industry, and their Carbon Footprinting Tool offers a bespoke way to measure and report with confidence. The tool measures carbon footprint from cradle to grave to inform better decisions within the graphics industry.

Our other key suppliers are continually developing PVC free variants to satisfy demand including Cover Styl' and Contra Vision. All these new innovations are offered to continue to strive for new and more eco-friendly solutions for customers.

OUR SOCIAL PERFORMANCE

As a seventh generation family business, we know that at the heart of every successful business is its people. With award winning customer experience underpinning everything we do, we understand that customer experience begins with employee experience – a happy workplace delivers genuine outstanding customer interactions.

And the investment within our people is a major part of our ongoing success.

Staff tend to stick around. Our retention rates are impressive – and almost a quarter of our staff have been with us for at least 20 years – our sharp focus on learning and development has allowed many of our team to grow into senior roles.



PROGRESSION

At William Smith, ambition has no ceiling. Many of our leaders began on the shop floor or as apprentices, rising through the business thanks to our commitment to talent and opportunity.

Take Ian Spence. He started in fabrication, mastered his craft, and climbed into sales. Today, he leads as Internal Sales Manager – proof that hard work here always finds a path upward.

Our Managing Director, Rob Smith, carries forward nearly 200 years of family heritage. But he hasn't just inherited the role – he's earned it. Over 18 years, Rob worked across every department in the company before stepping into leadership.

From the workshop to the boardroom, our story is one of growth, grit, and opportunity.

At William Smith, we are a member of several respected trade associations.



TRAINING & ENGAGEMENT

Totalling over 3,000 training hours company-wide, with £75k of investment in order to boost learning and development throughout the business.

Additionally, almost 10% of our staff are enrolled in leadership training programmes aimed at helping them develop in their senior roles within the business.

Our team also benefit from individual development plans to ensure ongoing growth, while bespoke training packages – carried out remotely and in-person – support upskilling and development throughout the business.

Our most-recent employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) – a metric used to measure engagement, loyalty and job satisfaction – produced a rating of +43, a healthy engagement level which surpasses the industry benchmark range (between 10-40).

Our most recent staff survey (October 2024) showed a 30% increase in the level of staff engagement – a testament to the positive practices consistently being integrated into the business, all of which resulted in the company being recognised as a finalist for two major awards: The UK Employee Experience Awards and the Lloyds Business Awards – where we were one of just 10 companies in the final – with both nominations a glowing endorsement for our superb culture.

We also won the Best Customer Experience Award in the 2025 Sign Industry Awards, nominated by our customers. As a finalist within the Growing Business Awards and North East Business Awards in 2025, we continue to be recognised for our investment in our people.





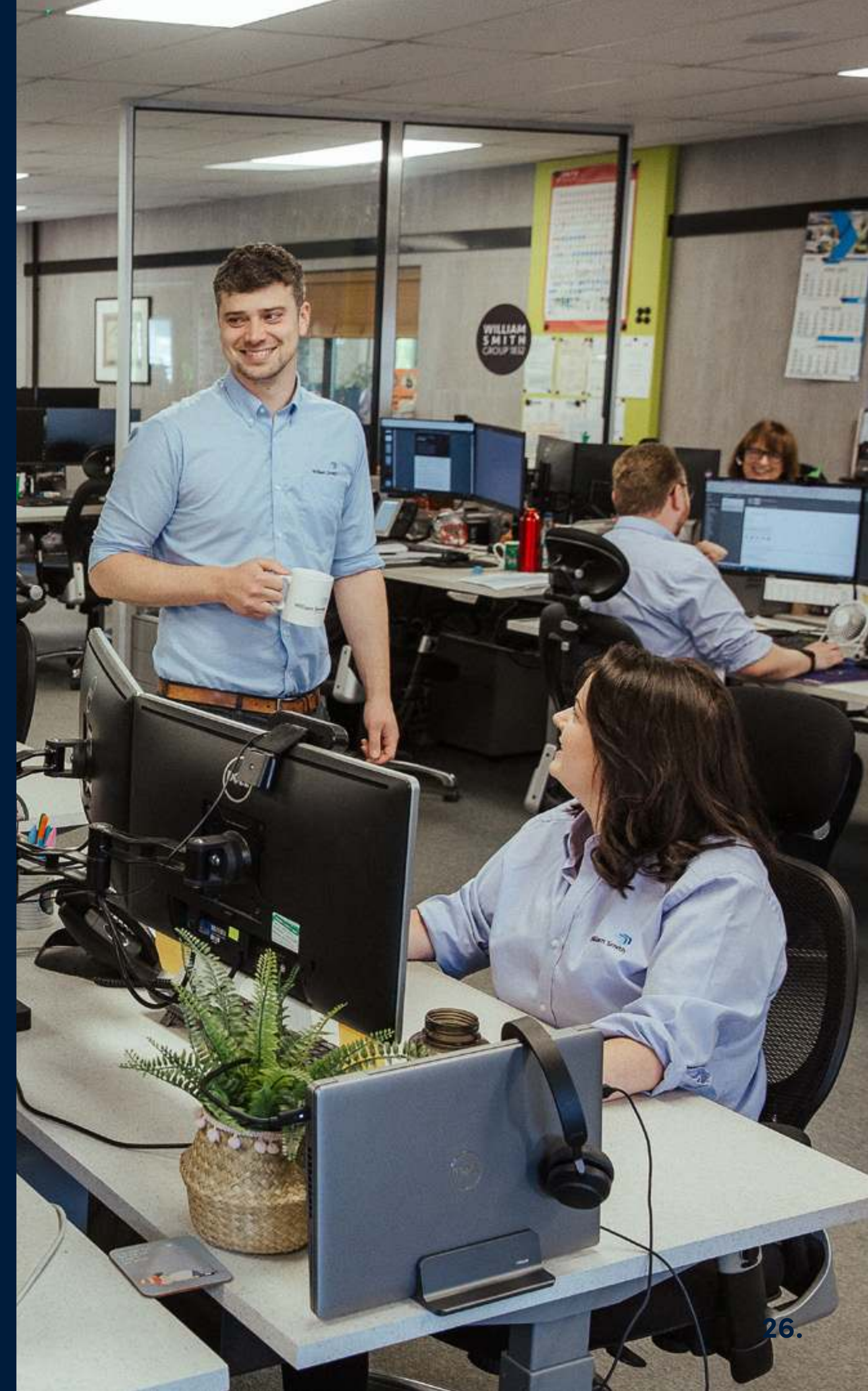
DIVERSITY

92% of staff have at least one year of service with William Smith

39% The number of roles filled by female staff

3 the number of females on our eight-person board

25–33 The age group with the most staff



EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

Seven staff have been upskilled as mental health first aiders, while we have 14 traditional first aiders based across the business – with one always on-site.

During Mental Health Awareness Week, we provide everything from lunchtime yoga sessions to community walks, and host speeches on mental health self-care. All initiatives aim to educate and support our teams, offering valuable resources and programs.

Our Employee Assist Program is accessible to all members of staff, delivered by Health Assured – the UK’s leading wellbeing provider.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT:

9 managers enrolled in the Future Leaders programme to help them grow into more senior roles.

50/50

mix of in-person and digital learning through our LMS system, Eloomi, which tailors role-specific training to individual teams’ needs.

100%

of our staff with access to Personal Development Plans (PDPs) – and who complete annual compliance courses to ensure we meet legal and safety standards.

3,000 training hours company-wide

£75K investment in learning and development

10% of staff are enrolled in leadership training programmes

30% increase in the level of staff engagement



RETENTION

1,198

The combined number of years of service within the company

<12%

employee turnover rate



8 years

The median length of service for each employee

2.82%

The average rate of absence





DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

At William Smith, we truly value our employees and strive to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive workplace.

As such, we've created an equal opportunities policy featuring five key beliefs to make that a reality.



Upholding fair wages, benefits, and equal employment opportunities.



Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of the organisation.



Providing professional development and training opportunities.



Ensuring a safe and healthy work environment.



Encouraging a work-life balance and employee well-being programs.



Flexible home working where possible (role dependent).



An extra day of holiday for every five years of service.



Holiday purchase scheme.



Cycle to work scheme.



Reward vouchers.



Employee of the Month rewards.



OUR GOVERNANCE PERFORMANCE

We are ISO 9001 certified, the globally recognised gold standard for quality management.

It objectively demonstrates that we have implemented effective processes while it acts as a trusted system to help us continuously monitor and improve the quality of our products and services.

Additionally, we have had no compliance issues within the past five years.

OUR ETHICAL POLICIES

We recognise the need to operate ethically and transparently as a business and we've adapted a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy which outlines our solid commitment to sustainable business practices, ethical governance, employee well-being, environmental protection, and community engagement.

Paramount to it is that we create a safe, inclusive workspace – something we've delivered through a diverse workforce and a razor sharp focus on wellbeing.

We are committed to an ethical supply chain. We have innovated by introducing greener products, and not only are we a carbon-neutral business but we are consistently seeking ways to lower that footprint via initiatives such as fully recyclable packaging.

Our ever-evolving policies apply to all employees, business partners, and stakeholders involved in our operations, and include a zero-tolerance approach when it comes to corrupt practices such as bribery.

Additionally, we uphold the highest standards of business ethics through responsible corporate governance, whilst fully complying with all applicable laws and industry regulations.

All of our key policies are reviewed regularly and updated as required.

We also have partnered with Pentagon Assurance, a trusted name in risk management, to manage our health and safety procedures and have an action plan in place, working towards HSG65.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

All of our waste is professionally disposed of through respected and trusted partners, while in terms of chemical disposal, we are fully compliant with Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, with regular risk assessments carried out.

Additionally, our staff's safety is enhanced through our own safety measures – such as high-quality PPE, safety shoes and walkways.

Regular inspections are held. Maintenance work carried out to prevent environmental leaks. We constantly monitor emerging regulations.

OUR FUTURE COMMITMENTS



ENVIRONMENTAL

“Towards Carbon Neutral Operations by 2035”

We are actively measuring and reducing our footprint, with food waste diversion, skip usage monitoring, and efficiency projects paving the way.

“Zero Waste to Landfill by 2030”

We are embedding recycling across sites and redesigning packaging to be recyclable, reusable, or compostable.

“100% Sustainable Packaging by 2030”

Every product we send out will come in packaging designed for a circular economy.



SOCIAL

“Building a Culture of Wellbeing & Inclusion”

We empower our people through health, wellbeing, and engagement initiatives, ensuring every voice is heard.

“Sustainability Beyond Our Walls”

Through supplier partnerships and local engagement, we extend our impact into communities and supply chains.



GOVERNANCE

“Transparent & Accountable ESG Reporting”

We publish progress openly, aligning with leading frameworks to track our journey.

“Responsible Supply Chains by 2030”

We will hold suppliers to the same sustainability standards we set for ourselves, embedding ESG into every stage of procurement.

Long-term vision:

As a proud carbon neutral business for the past two years, our aim is for this to be bestowed on the business annually.

And our long-term vision is to go even greener.

In an industry where PVC remains prevalent, we are driving change by offering fully recyclable production solutions.

This is part of our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and is a core part of our Corporate Social Responsibility Policy.



SUMMARY

Rather than merely being a box-ticking exercise, ESG is integral to William Smith, and this report highlights the immense benefits it brings to our business.

Many of those achievements have become ingrained within the business; From our ongoing certification for becoming carbon neutral, our drive towards a diverse leadership team, or our decades-long commitment to helping projects that benefit our community in Barnard Castle – ESG has been put to great use.

Over the past year, the team has made real progress across a range of areas, and the results speak for themselves.

Can we do better? Yes. Always.

That's why we've established ESG as an ongoing agenda item, with a skilled team working each day to find and implement improvements.

However, this report shows the incredible progress we have made – and the tangible difference William Smith makes to both our community – and our planet.

Our carbon footprint is **non-existent**.

Grassroots sport within our community has flourished thanks to **£17,000 work of sponsorship**.

Employment **satisfaction is high**, and the vast majority of our staff remain with us for years.



**WILLIAM
SMITH**
GROUP 1832

