



Scottish Leather Group

Sustainability Report 2020



“Sustainable manufacturing is not a set of limitations, but an opportunity.

Innovation is essential to move ever closer to our ultimate goal of zero waste leather manufacturing.”

Dr Warren Bowden
Sustainability and Innovation Director
Scottish Leather Group

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Photography throughout taken prior to Covid-19 social distancing measures.
Data reported throughout is from calendar year 2019 and relates to Scottish Leather Group owned and operated facilities.

Welcome to Scottish Leather Group's eighth annual Sustainability Report, which summarises our activities and commitments on our journey towards a sustainable future.

Introduction

We are delighted to introduce our 2020 Group Sustainability Report, which is the Scottish Leather Group’s 17th annual report on our progress towards a more sustainable business.



Robbie Brown
Chairman
Scottish Leather Group



Iain McFadyen
CEO
Scottish Leather Group

We are very proud of the progress that we have made but we remain more focused than ever on the journey ahead. We are particularly excited that we are now closing in on two of our key ‘zero’ targets; zero process waste to landfill and carbon neutral for Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR), which we aim to achieve by 2025.

In these unusual times, with Covid-19 ‘lockdown’ restrictions and widespread business closures, we are all reminded that sustainability is not only a virtuous steady state of operations but also requires a resilience and agility of business purpose. At the heart of that purpose is a concern for the safety and wellbeing of our employees, contractors and the communities that surround our manufacturing sites; this is something on which we will never compromise.

We are particularly grateful to our employees, and to our customers, suppliers and supply chain partners for their understanding and support during the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic.

This year’s report again adopts the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework for highlighting our achievements and ambitions. 2020 was to have been an auspicious year for those of us at the forefront of sustainable business in Scotland with Glasgow hosting the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November. Sadly, we now know that COP26 has been rescheduled, and the Group looks forward to playing our part in welcoming the global sustainability community to Glasgow in 2021.

Our leather is made from hides that are a by-product of beef and dairy production, providing a valuable waste solution for this perishable substance which we are proud to be able to manufacture into beautiful, long lasting, luxurious leather. UK and Irish livestock thrive on abundant verdant pasture. As well as having the highest welfare standards, these extensive grass-based feeding systems make them among the lowest carbon footprint of all cattle worldwide, with greenhouse gas emissions that are approximately half that of the global average*.

It is our pride and our responsibility to produce this most beautiful long lasting and versatile leather in ways that do not use irreplaceable resources and do not damage the environment.

*As stated by the UK Government Committee on Climate Change.

Naturally superior

Real leather is an inherently sustainable material.

We make high value luxury leather out of a by-product from the beef and dairy industries.

Performance Naturally
video (click here)



1.

Leather is the original upcycling industry. Our philosophy is rooted in circular manufacturing and making sensible use of finite resources.

2.

A significant proportion of our raw hides come from Scottish grass fed beef and dairy herds which have a net zero carbon impact*.

3.

Real leather has a low environmental and carbon impact. Our leather has the lowest carbon intensity in the industry.

4.

Leather is long lasting and improves with age, softening with use and developing a desirable patina.

5.

Leather is renewable, repairable and breathable, unlike petrochemical derived synthetics.

*As stated by Quality Meat Scotland.

A comprehensive approach

Given its history of family ownership, Scottish Leather Group recognises that much of its long-term success depends on being fully embedded in its community and its environment. This good neighbourliness has evolved into the most comprehensive sustainability strategy I have seen anywhere in the global leather industry.



Dr Mike Redwood
Leather Industry Consultant
and Spokesperson
Leather Naturally
Michael Redwood

“The most comprehensive sustainability strategy I have seen anywhere in the global leather industry.”

Being a natural material from a renewable source, which lasts far longer in use than all alternatives, leather is one of the most sustainable materials available. It is much easier to maintain and clean than other materials, which require regular laundry or dry cleaning – often accounting for 30% to 40% of their lifetime carbon footprint.

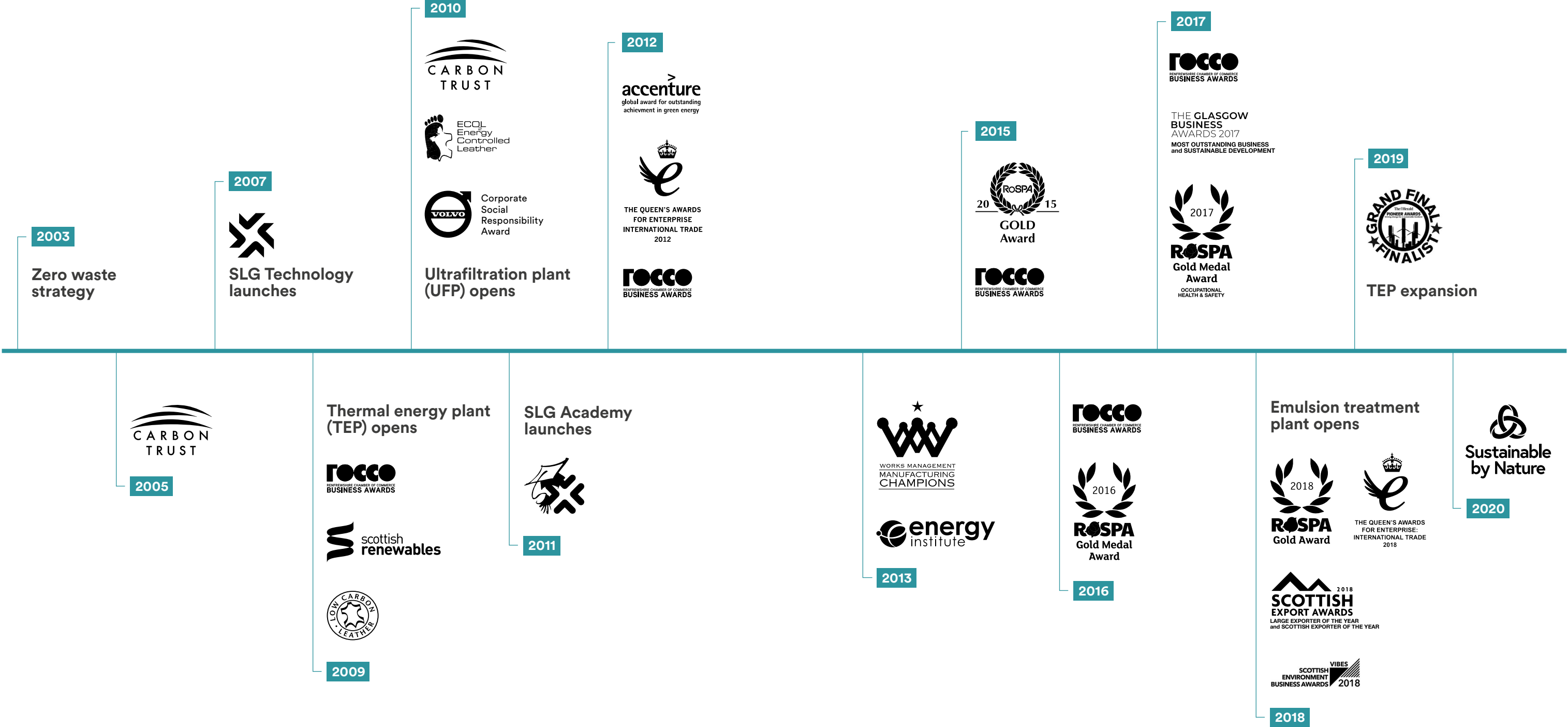
What I have found remarkable at Scottish Leather Group has been the adoption of a philosophy that takes basic approaches to new levels and a willingness to invest considerable finances into pioneering technologies, transforming the use of energy, water and other resources and the management of waste. Scottish Leather Group’s thermal energy plant and membrane ultrafiltration plant are two leading edge initiatives that have had a huge impact.

To my mind Scottish Leather Group demonstrates good citizenship at the highest level with one of the most thorough approaches to sustainability in the leather industry – and in any industry. Everyone using their leather should feel proud to be handling a material developed with such a well thought through and wholeheartedly embraced sustainability strategy.

The Group’s commitment to sustainability means that much wider areas of corporate social responsibility are also under constant review. The Group is adept at staying in touch with advances in society, scientific knowledge and technology. It is particularly encouraging to see the existence of such a well trained team, with many younger members applying some of the best minds to monitoring sustainability and looking for further opportunities.

Our journey to zero

Since 2003, when the Group launched its zero waste strategy, we have made formal commitments to carbon reduction and sustainable manufacturing. We approach the final stages of that journey with our goal to reach zero by 2025 – zero embedded carbon and zero process waste to landfill.



Sustainable by Nature

**Leather is naturally sustainable.
So is our business.**

Scottish Leather Group's focus on sustainability enables us to make the world's lowest carbon leather. Sustainable by Nature is our commitment to put our impact on the environment, society and economy at the forefront of our decision making.

sustainablebynature.co.uk



Muirhead's sample service lets customers see and feel the quality and performance of our sustainable leather first-hand.

Our commitments to the future

Scottish Leather Group is committed to the sustainable manufacturing of leather and our journey to zero is leading the leather industry. We already produce the world’s lowest carbon intensity leather, and we continue to improve. We are committed to circular manufacturing, making use of waste as resources.

We have increased our thermal energy plant’s capacity, which will enable us to reach zero process waste to landfill by 2025. The sustainability of our society is equally important, so we continuously invest in the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees, as well as positive engagement with our local community.

We work closely with our customers and their needs drive our sustainable manufacturing processes. We develop innovative tanning methods and source hides responsibly because these sustainable practices add value to our product. Responsible sourcing of materials and the ‘farm to factory’ traceability of hides enables transparency throughout our supply chain. We use industry recognised Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) to independently measure and benchmark the impact of our manufacturing process and supply chains and we’re always working to keep improving.

Sustainable manufacturing is not a set of limitations, but an opportunity. Innovation is essential to move ever closer to our ultimate goal of zero waste leather manufacturing.

Making leather is the epitome of upcycling; transforming a by-product of the beef and dairy industries into a versatile, enduring, luxury product. Scottish Leather Group aim beyond that to achieve the most sustainable practices in the leather industry. We make the lowest carbon intensity leather by sourcing locally, recovering energy from waste, reducing process waste to landfill, using renewable energy and increasing the value of our co-products used in other sectors.

Sustainability is in our DNA and we continue to strive for improvement. We have made six major commitments to increased sustainability, securing our future as industry leaders:

2020	2021	2022
Our suppliers shall be signatories to our Code of Conduct.	We will be accredited to, and exceed the requirements of, the Healthy Working Lives standards for employee wellbeing.	We will be accredited to the UN Global Compact.
2023	2025	2025
We will have verified the integrity of our supply chain to meet internationally accepted standards.	We will have zero process waste to landfill through circular manufacturing.	We will reduce our direct impacts to become carbon neutral, as reported under SECR.

The United Nations

Global Compact

The UN Global Compact is a network initiative that provides a framework for organisations around the world to better embed and promote sustainability practices and principles in business.

Last year Scottish Leather Group committed to the eight UN Sustainable Development Goals where the textile industry has the most impact. This year we have gone further and joined the UN Global Compact.

The Compact asks companies to embrace, support and enact, within their sphere of influence, a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment, and anti-corruption.

The UN Global Compact is an annual accreditation recognised by global initiatives such as DRIVE Sustainability. Accreditation to the Compact will add greater recognition and independent scrutiny of our achievements.



The 10 Principles

01	Human rights	Support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.
02		Ensure you are not complicit in human rights abuse.
03	Labour standards	Uphold the freedom of association and the recognition of the right to collective bargaining.
04		Uphold the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour.
05		Uphold the abolition of child labour.
06		Uphold the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.
07	Environment	Support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.
08		Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.
09		Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.
10	Anti-corruption	Work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

The United Nations

Sustainable Development Goals

As signatories to the UN Global Compact, we recognise the UN Sustainable Development Goals and measure our performance against them.

A research partnership between Textile Exchange and KPMG produced a report entitled *Threading the Needle*.

It identified eight UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) out of the full set of 17 where the textile sector, which includes the leather industry, can create the most impact for change.

These eight goals, ratified by the UN, help us examine and explain how our commitments to sustainable manufacturing practices have a positive impact on the environment, economy and society.



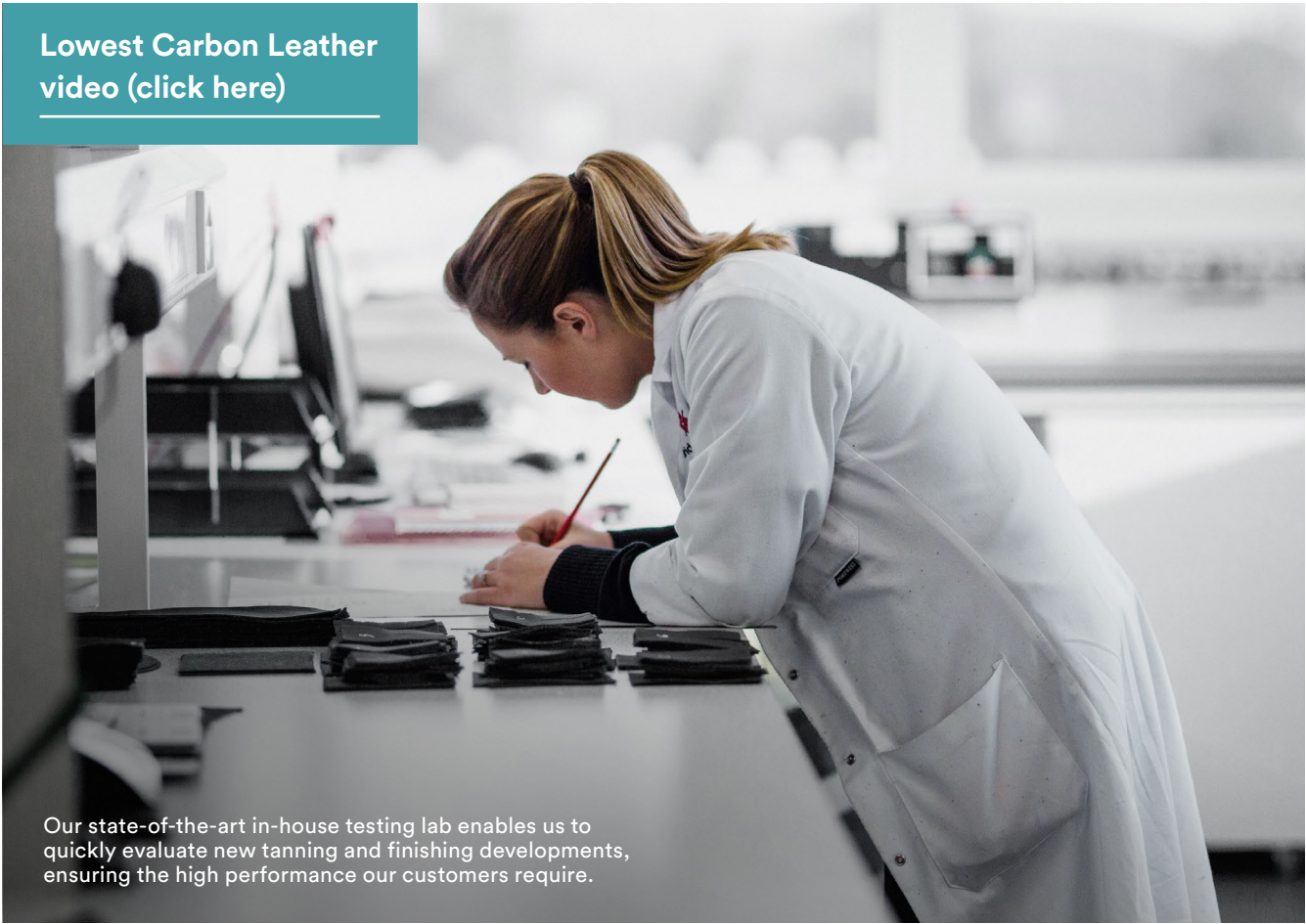
01		No poverty	02		Zero hunger
03		Good health and wellbeing	04		Quality education
05		Gender equality	06		Clean water and sanitation
07		Affordable and clean energy	08		Decent work and economic growth
09		Industry, innovation and infrastructure	10		Reduced inequalities
11		Sustainable cities and communities	12		Responsible consumption and production
13		Climate action	14		Life below water
15		Life on land	16		Peace, justice and strong institutions
17		Partnerships for the goals			

UN Sustainable Development Goal 12
Responsible consumption and production



We make the world’s lowest carbon intensity leather, at 1.4kg of CO₂ per hide.

Lowest Carbon Leather video (click here)



Our state-of-the-art in-house testing lab enables us to quickly evaluate new tanning and finishing developments, ensuring the high performance our customers require.

“Our customers select us as a supplier because we lead the way in responsible production of leather – a choice that reflects positively on their own brands.”

The Group ensures that all materials used throughout our leather production are responsibly sourced.

Our innovative tanning methods minimise chemical waste. This is just one of the ways we are reducing our overall consumption of finite materials. We have cut our production waste to landfill by 63% and are investing to reach 100% by 2025 – becoming a zero process waste manufacturer.

Our technical team is working on new finishes and leathers using bio-based or responsibly sourced REACH registered chemicals, whilst still meeting the evolving demands of the automotive, aviation, rail and upholstery sectors.

Sustainability is a priority for everybody. Our customers retain and grow market share by demonstrating positive social and environmental commitments. They select us as a supplier because we lead the way in responsible production of leather – a choice that reflects positively on their own brands. It is imperative that our Group continues to evolve to meet customer needs on sustainability as well as product performance and quality.

We remain at the forefront of the leather industry due to our lean manufacturing techniques, careful selection of chemicals, innovative use of equipment and the reuse of our waste streams.

Our commitments

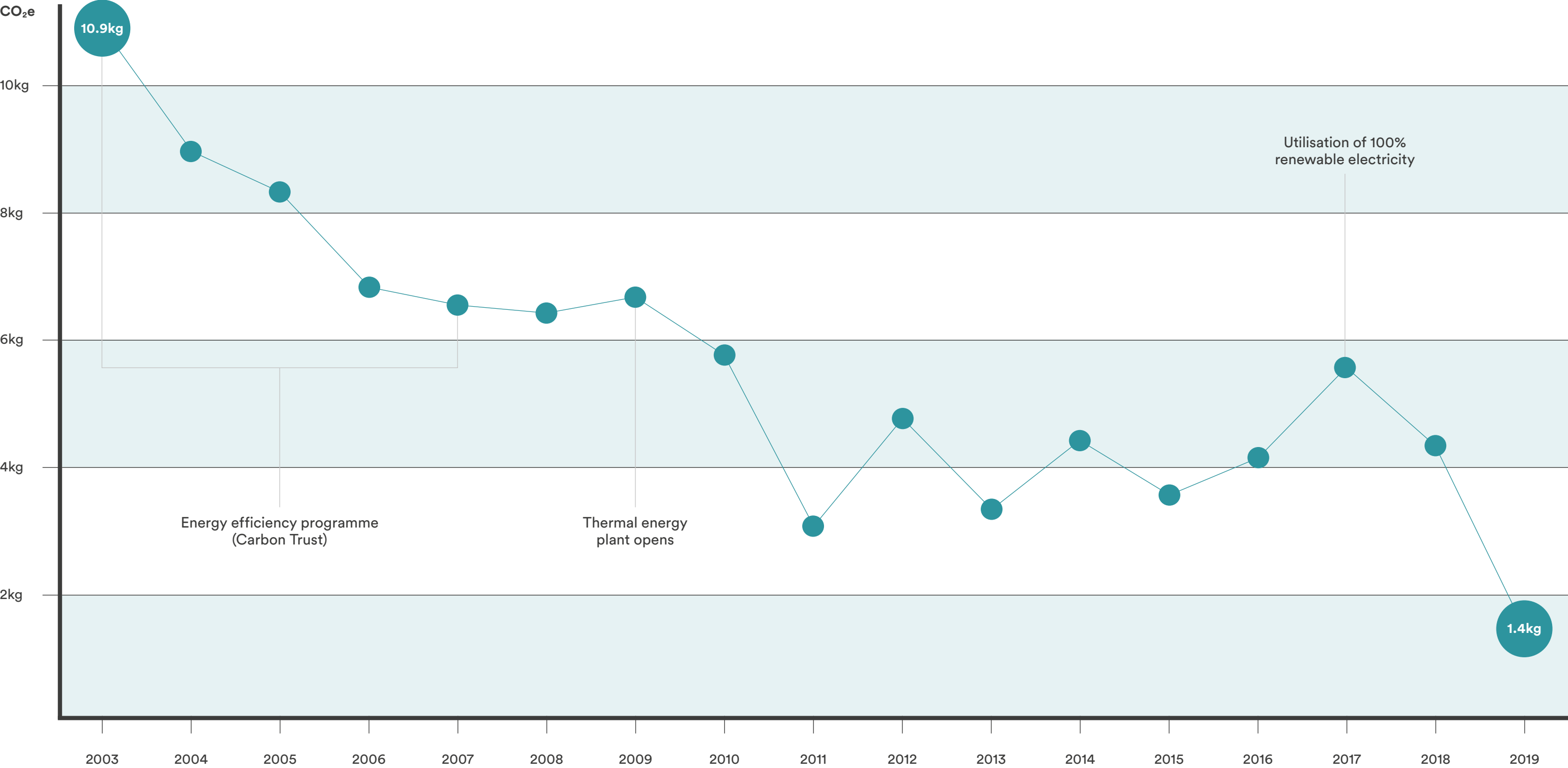
By 2020 Our suppliers shall be signatories to our Code of Conduct.

By 2022 We will be accredited to the UN Global Compact.

By 2025 We will reduce our direct impacts to become carbon neutral, as reported under SECR.

Carbon intensity

Converting waste into energy, as well as using solely renewable wind derived electricity, has dramatically reduced the carbon intensity measured as carbon dioxide equivalent of our leather. This graph shows the average carbon intensity of our leather per hide, reducing by calendar year.



UN Sustainable Development Goal 15
Life on land



We source our raw hides locally from responsible suppliers.

Sourcing Locally video (click here)

Alan Meston of Chapelton Farm, Stonehaven. One of our local suppliers raising high quality grass fed livestock for the beef industry.

“Sourcing hides within the UK and Ireland ensures we reduce our carbon footprint and associated transport costs.”

We procure 98% of our raw hides from UK and Irish sources. These include 78% of Scottish grass fed livestock, which are described as carbon neutral according to Quality Meat Scotland.

Sourcing hides within the UK and Ireland ensures we reduce our carbon footprint and associated transport costs.

Our hides are predominantly sourced from Scotland and Northern Ireland, chosen for their quality and suitability, as well as proximity. Our raw hides are sourced responsibly to provide traceability and accountability. We ensure compliance with the Five Freedoms Principles of animal

husbandry, developed by the UK Farm Animal Welfare Council and adopted by animal welfare organisations around the world.

All of our raw hides are a by-product of the beef and dairy industries. They are sourced directly from abattoirs that are subject to daily inspections by Government veterinarians and licensed under UK and EU regulations. This procurement policy ensures that our hides come from healthy cattle herds, certified at the highest level for animal welfare by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation.

100% of our raw hides are now supplied with Edible Certification, which allows us to broaden our customer base both geographically and by product use. This means we can be more diverse in our sales portfolio, compensating for a fluctuating market.

The Group has adopted a ‘farm to factory’ initiative in its purchasing processes. This is designed to promote the traceability of raw hides, so that we can be assured of the ethical treatment of each and every animal. During the last year we have made significant advances towards implementing individual hide traceability.

Our commitments

By 2020 Our suppliers shall be signatories to our Code of Conduct.

By 2022 We will be accredited to the UN Global Compact.

By 2025 We will reduce our direct impacts to become carbon neutral, as reported under SECR.

UN Sustainable Development Goal 6
Clean water and sanitation



Our water-efficient tanneries use only half as much water per hide as our competitors* and we filter and recycle what we use.



Our ultrafiltration plant treats wastewater from our tanneries, enabling us to re-use it.

“Our ultrafiltration plant enables us to recycle up to 40% of our treated water back into production.”

We primarily source water from our own loch – a natural, local source of clean Scottish water.

Our ultrafiltration plant enables us to recycle up to 40% of our treated water back into production. This significantly reduces our intake from the loch, minimising impact on the local watershed.

The upcoming expansion of our plant will allow us to recycle even more wastewater back into production. Treated wastewater not re-used by us is further treated by Scottish Water before rejoining the ecosystem of the River Clyde as clean water. We complete this circular process by managing and maintaining the welfare of our loch.

Our commitments

By 2022 We will be accredited to the UN Global Compact.

UN Sustainable Development Goal 7
Affordable and clean energy



Our pioneering thermal energy plant generates heat from our own waste to power our tanneries.



Our thermal plant is close coupled to the tanneries for waste delivery and heat transfer.

“Our patented thermal process provides Scottish Leather Group with its own renewable heating system, significantly lowering our carbon footprint.”

In line with our zero waste strategy, established in 2003, we have developed, and continue to use and develop, alternative sources of renewable energy across all three of our manufacturing sites.

Our patented thermal process provides Scottish Leather Group with its own renewable heating system, converting our waste streams into heat, which powers our tanneries, significantly lowering our carbon footprint. The current expansion of our thermal energy plant will enable us to increase our capacity to provide renewable heat on-site.

Our independently audited performance to the UK Climate Change Agreement demonstrates our determination to reduce our carbon footprint. We only use electricity from renewable and carbon neutral wind sources, further reducing the carbon intensity of our operations.

This commitment to clean energy has dramatically reduced the carbon intensity measured as carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) of our product, from a baseline of 10.9kg of CO₂e per hide in 2003, to only 1.4kg of CO₂e per hide now. A reduction of over 86%.

We also provide electric vehicle charging points for staff and visitor parking and plan to continue de-carbonising our energy mix.

Our commitment

By 2022 We will be accredited to the UN Global Compact.

UN Sustainable Development Goal 9
Industry, innovation and infrastructure



We are a Circular Glasgow ambassador, promoting Scotland’s place at the forefront of the circular economy.



Circular Manufacturing
video (click here)



Leather shavings on their way to becoming fuel for our thermal energy plant.

“We have already reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill by 63%. This is a major landmark in our journey to zero process waste by 2025.”

Our thermal energy plant, unique in the leather industry, enables us to convert solid waste to steam, circularising the manufacture of our leather and creating revenue from the sale of bio-oil.

In developing our own renewable driven self-heating system we have already reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill by 63%. This reduction in landfill is a major landmark in our journey to zero process waste by 2025. The plant is currently undergoing expansion to bring our goal of zero process waste nearer to reality.

Responsible sourcing of hides, and all other materials, as well as development of innovative tanning methods, all add value to our luxury leather product.

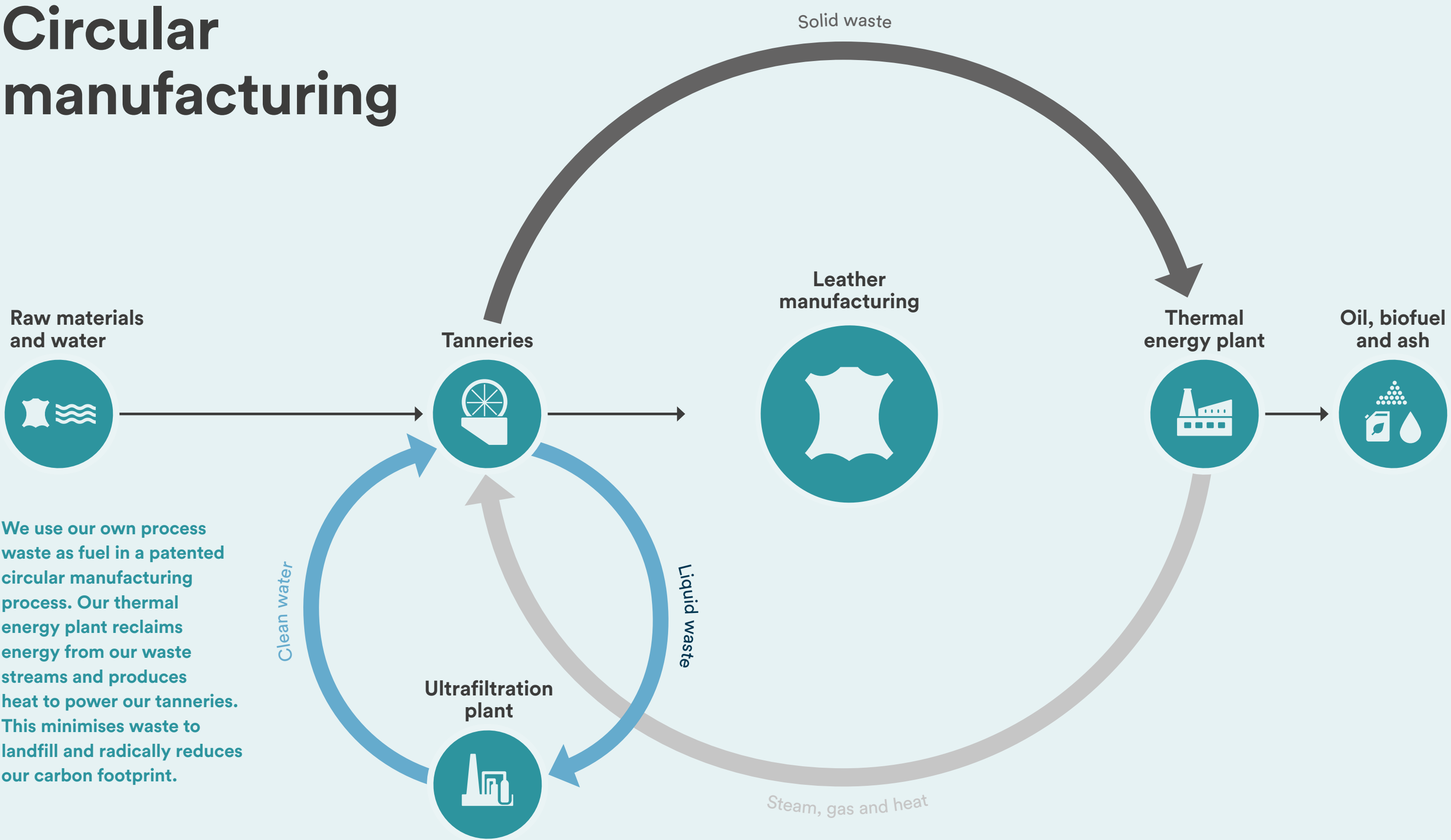
Innovation in all areas is necessary to progress industry change towards a zero impact sustainable manufacturing platform. This is not a set of limitations but an opportunity that Scottish Leather Group is proud to be harnessing.

Our commitment

By 2022 We will be accredited to the UN Global Compact.

By 2025 We will have zero process waste to landfill through circular manufacturing.

Circular manufacturing



UN Sustainable Development Goal 8
Decent work and economic growth



We have created the leather industry’s first recognised vocational qualifications, certified by the SQA.



Muirhead workers loading hides into the staker to be massaged, naturally separating the leather’s fibres to improve softness and flexibility.

The success of Scottish Leather Group is, above all, driven by our talented team of people. They are our most important asset in achieving our goals and ambitions.

Our people play a crucial part in delivering our long-term strategy for growth and commitment to sustainability. They are key in achieving our vision to be the most successful and respected group of leather manufacturing companies in the world.

We created the leather industry’s first recognised vocational qualifications, certified by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), building skills that benefit the whole field. In 2020 we will launch our foundation management development programme. This will equip our front line Supervisors and Team Leaders with the required skills to ensure they are successful in their roles, as well as improving their overall confidence and helping them reach their full potential.

The health, safety and wellbeing of our employees is paramount. We promote the workplace based Healthy Working Lives initiative, encompassing employee workplace recognition, equal pay and equal rights. All companies in the Group have achieved either the Silver or Gold awards. Scottish Leather Group maintains policies and practices to prevent modern slavery and promote a safe working environment.

Investment in our manufacturing processes continues with the replacement of processing vessels in the tanneries with higher efficiency units, and investment in the expansion of Thermal Energy and Water Treatment and Recycling Plants, bringing us another step closer to the internalisation of waste and water.

Industry 4.0 has provided insight into possibilities for the tannery of the future with a more efficient and automated process based on the integration of cloud-based systems, enabling higher levels of productivity.

As part of our Operational Excellence programme, the Group is investing in new accounting and automation systems to provide greater integration and automation of processes, to improve production scheduling and right first-time operations. This will be augmented in the coming years with increased traceability of hides using visual tracking systems – hides will be individually marked with a unique reference, enabling the leather to be traced to the point of origin.

Our commitments

By 2021 We will be accredited to, and exceed the requirements of, the Healthy Working Lives standards for employee wellbeing.

By 2022 We will be accredited to the UN Global Compact.

UN Sustainable Development Goal 5
Gender equality



We are an equal opportunities and equal pay employer.



Robert McLatchie, Trainee Manufacturing Engineer, and Iona Wright, Research and Development Small Batch Operator, both work at Bridge of Weir having completed their apprenticeships.

“By working with local schools and engaging with community fairs, we hope to bridge the gender gap in STEM industries.”

We are committed to strict ethical standards and equality practices across the Group. This begins with gender equality, with equal pay for equivalent roles, and extends across all of our behaviours.

We are supporting STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) education and have a dedicated team who educate students of all genders and from all socio-economic backgrounds in local schools about the leather making process and how STEM subjects are vital across our industry.

Science, technology, engineering and maths form the backbone of leather manufacture, and by working with local schools and engaging with community fairs, we hope to not only recruit the next generation of leather technologists, but also bridge the gender gap in STEM industries.

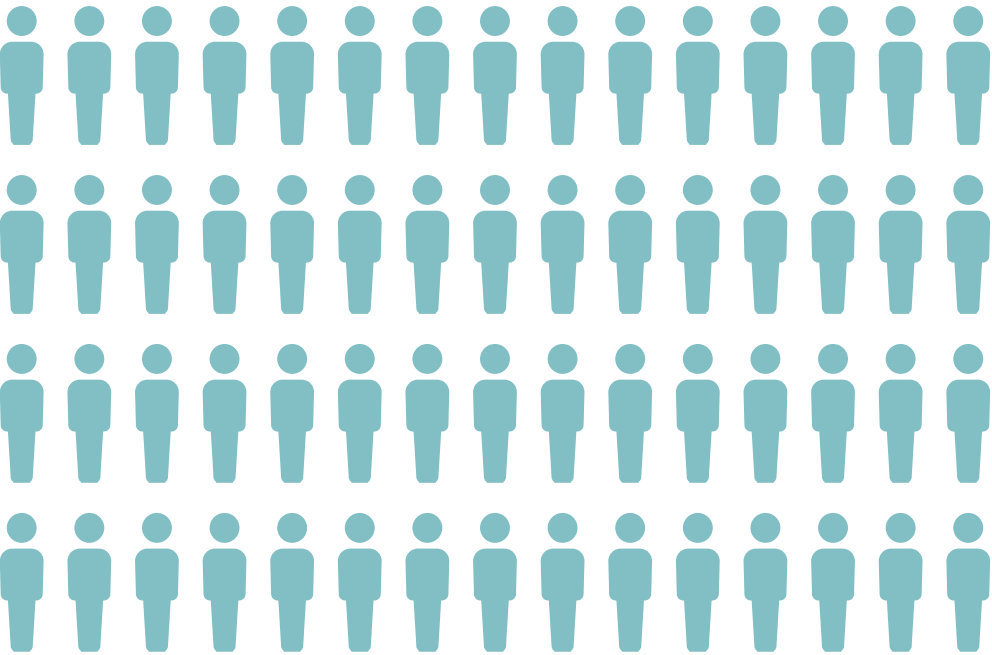
Our commitment

By 2022 We will be accredited to the UN Global Compact.

UN Sustainable Development Goal 10
Reduced inequalities



Our two-year SLG Academy programme develops the next generation of future leather innovators.



60+ apprentices to date

“In 2020 we are widening our Academy offering to include career disciplines such as Commercial, Finance and Marketing.”

In 2020 we will enter our eighth year of the SLG Academy. To date we have developed over 60 apprentices within Manufacturing and Production and Maintenance Engineering.

Some of our apprentices have gone on to more advanced positions, having graduated or currently attending University to gain degrees in Leather Technology and Engineering and Design and Manufacturing. In 2020 we are widening our Academy offering to include broader career disciplines such as Commercial, Finance and Marketing.

At Scottish Leather Group we also take great pride in being an employer who promotes employee wellbeing. We are an avid supporter of the Healthy Working Lives Programme, an NHS Scotland initiative to help promote positive mental health, health improvement and health and safety. We are delighted to have achieved Gold and Silver awards across all of our operating companies.

We have diligent labour and payroll monitoring systems and both discrete and overt links with our supply chains. We actively audit our supply chain.

The Group practices and expects integrity, honesty, fairness and respect for people in all aspects of business. We are dedicated to practicing the highest standards for quality, technology, value and service.

The Group complies with all relevant laws, regulations and codes of conduct and refrains from anti-competitive practices. We believe bribery, corruption and human trafficking are a blight on society.

By insisting that suppliers commit to our Code of Conduct we are working to ensure that our supply chain adheres to locally applicable regulations and the highest ethical standards.

Our commitments

By 2020 Our suppliers shall be signatories to our Code of Conduct.

By 2022 We will be accredited to the UN Global Compact.

By 2023 We will have verified the integrity of our supply chain to meet internationally accepted standards.

In the community

The Group’s charitable and community engagement aims to make a lasting impact in the communities local to each of our manufacturing sites. We support educational and training establishments serving the needs of the leather industry, organisations that promote the use of leather, and charities whose beneficiaries were employed within the leather industry.



James Lang
External Relations Director,
Scottish Leather Group

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. J. Lang'.

“Our charitable and community engagement is often not a single gift but ongoing support to make a lasting difference.”

An increasing number of employees have become involved in and demonstrated enthusiasm for raising funds, or giving their time and skills, to benefit a wide range of causes in the communities around our sites. This giving, in its many forms, is testament to the corporate culture we aim to nurture.

Our charitable and community engagement is often not a single gift but ongoing support to make a lasting difference.

Muirhead once again took to their bicycles, this time in support of local charity Common Wheel in Glasgow, while employees at Bridge of Weir Leather raised funds for the Euan Campbell Foundation and the company were pleased to match the employee-raised funds.

Building on last year’s success the Spirit of Christmas Gift Appeal was an exemplary employee-driven project in which a huge number of children’s gifts were donated, from small toys to bikes and scooters, which benefitted underprivileged children across Renfrewshire and Glasgow through three charities: Children 1st Glasgow, Renfrewshire Toy Bank and Families First Johnstone.

The Group continued its support within the leather industry through the Leather & Hide Trade Benevolent Institution, which helps those who have worked in the trade and now need support.

A significant donation by Scottish Leather Group Technology was made towards the fight against Sepsis through Sepsis Research FEAT.

The Group continued its support of the National Leather Collection in Northampton. A project known as ‘The Leather Hub’ is in progress to ensure the legacy of the leather industry is sustainable.

In addition to financial and charitable donations, Group staff have supported STEM initiatives, giving talks and presentations in local schools and other local community-based organisations.

Our customers

The Group’s focus on sustainability is key to our ongoing relationships with our customers. Our actions and commitments reflect positively on their brands and our shared values strengthen our bond.



“As a leading brand in consumer electronics, Philips TV & Audio’s design headquarters are located in Amsterdam and we aspire to have a product positioning that encapsulates ‘European Design’.

We search for the best possible partners to co-develop meaningful products and materials relevant to our global target users.

Muirhead were an automatic fit, bringing a deep material knowledge together with an outstanding brand message of responsible sourcing and premium quality product achieved through sustainable processes.”

Rod White
Global Chief Design Officer,
Philips TV & Sound TPV



“At Aston Martin Lagonda sustainability is at the core of what we do in making beautiful handcrafted cars. We therefore select our partners with the greatest of care and consideration for their respective approach to ethical and sustainable sourcing.

We are proud to source the leather for the interiors of our cars from Bridge of Weir, part of the Scottish Leather Group.”

Libby Meigh
Manager – Design,
Aston Martin Lagonda





Scottish Leather Group



Bridge of Weir®
FINE SCOTTISH LEATHER

Muirhead®
Fine Scottish Leather



Lang



NCT



SLG Technology



Sustainable
by Nature

It is our pride and our responsibility to produce this most beautiful long lasting and versatile leather in ways that do not use irreplaceable resources and do not damage the environment.



Scottish Leather Group



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