

Now & Next

People & Communities



We are equipping our people to transition to the circular economy whilst we play an active role in our local communities.

We are aiming to engage 10 million people on the circular economy and strive to have a diverse and inclusive workplace that is the safest in our industry.

- In this section**
- Create safe, diverse and inclusive workplaces
 - Diversity, equity and inclusion
 - Respect human rights
 - Engage our people and communities



Create safe, diverse and inclusive workplaces




262
sites with zero accidents this year

The circular economy provides opportunities for more inclusive growth, providing the resilience and the solutions society is calling for.

We believe that creating safe, diverse and inclusive workplaces is an essential prerequisite for our people to drive the transition to a circular economy.

A safe, diverse and inclusive workplace is a fundamental foundation for a successful company and crucial to our sustainability agenda and strategic goal 'to realise the potential of our people'.

We want all of our people to come to work every day feeling that they are safe and included.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH  Creating a safe and inclusive workplace helps to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers.

2023/24 highlights

12%
reduction in employee lost time accidents

25%
of managers have completed inclusive leadership workshops

Create safe, diverse and inclusive workplaces

2023/24 Health and Safety highlights

12%

reduction in employee lost time accidents compared to last year, **an all-time low**

40%

increase in employee H&S engagement, **an all-time high**

14%

reduction in total number of accidents¹ compared to last year



1. Accidents with and without lost time.
2. Sites include offices, paper mills, packaging plants and recycling depots.

262

sites with zero accidents this year across the Group



216,122

safety observation tours, **record high**



183,011

risk assessments recorded, **record high**

53%

of our sites operated without recording a single lost time accident for five years or more



11%

reduction in the total number of employee Accident Frequency Rate (AFR)

812,259

safety observations reported by employees during the year, **a record number**



169

sites with zero lost time accidents in the last five years or more²

25%

increase in leader-led health and safety activities compared to last year



62,633

safety shares led by senior managers

Create safe, diverse and inclusive workplaces continued

Reduce the Accident Frequency Rate (AFR) every year and strive to achieve Vision Zero

In 2023/24, we made significant progress and improvements across all divisions, reducing the Accident Frequency Rate (AFR)* by 6.5 per cent to a new record low of 1.65 (2022/23: 1.82).

Vision Zero underpins our safety culture across the whole business to empower our employees to be proactive, enabling them to identify and eliminate risks.

Vision Zero Health & Safety

Our safety culture is built on our Health and Safety strategy, Vision Zero. The strategy aims to foster an interdependent environment in which, every person takes responsibility for safety and will be alert to identifying and eliminating risks.

In 2023/24, we implemented various initiatives using our Vision Zero framework to seek to achieve our health and safety target of zero harm. These initiatives are aimed at emphasising leadership, engagement, processes and culture across the business.

Leadership

The conduct of leaders is pivotal to engagement, engaged leaders directly influence our health and safety employee engagement index.

Engagement

Engaged employees proactively identify and eliminate risk, driving a resilient and interdependent culture. The health and safety engagement index measures the rate of participation in risk identification and elimination activities.

Processes

Our robust health and safety processes are essential for a safe working environment. These include on-site health and safety auditing. These audits are aimed at driving continuous improvements and accelerating the implementation of our global health and safety standards, such as workplace transport, machine guarding or working at heights, which are driven through our Health & Safety networks.

Culture

Our focus on leadership, engagement and processes develops and drives an interdependent safety culture in which every person in the business is safety conscious, and will work hard to recognise and remove risk.

We believe that our pursuit of Vision Zero has been instrumental in creating a safe and healthy workplace.

Leadership engagement with Health & Safety

In 2023/24, our primary engagement has been facilitating a cultural transformation improvement through leadership's influence, enhancing the level of safety and well-being engagement within our organisation, whilst continuously eliminating risks at the operational level.

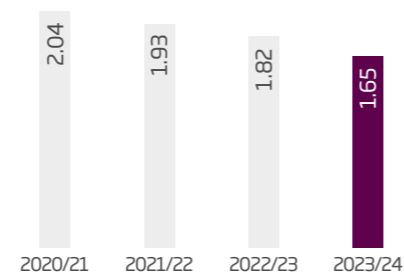
This included 25 per cent more leader-led health and safety activities, approximately 62,633 safety talks, 216,122 observation tours and 183,011 leader-led risk assessments, in comparison to 2022/23.

Policy

In 2023/24, we revised and relaunched our Group Health and Safety Policy, strengthening our commitment, articulating our vision, and outlining roles and responsibilities for all employees. This policy serves as a guiding framework that defines the purpose that motivates us, the goals we are working to achieve and the behaviours we expect of ourselves and each other.

In 2024/25, we will continue standardising our processes and ways of working across all divisions, ensuring we equip and empower our employees and foster a culture of safety leadership.

Accident Frequency Rate (AFR)*



* The Accident Frequency Rate (AFR) is the number of lost time accidents (LTAs) per million hours worked.



Leadership Health & Safety onboarding

The engagement and endorsement of Vision Zero across the organisation is the aim of our Health and Safety onboarding. Leaders have the ability to create a health and safety-conscious culture within their teams, it comes from the top down. To create this environment within our organisation our leaders need to be prepared to embrace it.

In November 2023, we conducted our first face-to-face Health and Safety onboarding since 2019 at our site in Gent, Belgium. The workshop was held for new leaders, focusing on Vision Zero and their role within it. 12 Plant Managers and General Managers from Packaging, Paper and Recycling attended the day.

"Leadership training is crucial to align new leaders with our values. Our goal is to provide our leadership teams with the tools, skills and understanding to communicate, implement and drive our Vision Zero strategy."

Marco Maguina
Group and Packaging Health, Safety and Environment Director



Ghimbav, Romania, transformation case

In response to several Lost Time Accidents (LTAs), a new management team at Ghimbav packaging plant was appointed, focusing on enhancing Health and Safety accountability at the operational level.

The Leadership in Action programme for senior managers was implemented to exemplify safety leadership and provide training for front-line managers to take ownership of their teams' safety. Employees were given clearly defined roles, processes were streamlined and user-friendly supporting systems were introduced, enabling active engagement and collaboration, ensuring a safer work environment.

Within a year of implementing these measures, Ghimbav became one of our highest-performing, safest sites in Packaging, with 784 days without an LTA at the end of 2023/24.

"With these changes in the finished goods depot, my work is more productive, risk-free and creates a friendly and healthy working environment."

Veres Mircea
Forklift Operator at Ghimbav

Create safe, diverse and inclusive workplaces continued

Health and mental well-being and occupational safety programmes

We believe that our people's well-being is an important aspect of Health and Safety, and one of the cornerstones of a profitable, innovative and sustainable business.

Our Well-being Framework provides our people with tools, inspiration and support to thrive, focusing on four key areas:

- **Taking the lead** - Encouraging everyone to set a positive example and champion well-being visibly and demonstrably.
- **Learning and development** - Providing knowledge and information to empower people to take ownership of their physical and mental well-being.
- **Engagement** - Working together, involving and including everyone to continuously improve health and well-being.
- **Toolkits** - Creating best practice tools to inspire and motivate positive and healthy people and workplaces.



→ [Turn to page 65 for our approach to customer and product safety and chemical safety](#)

Information and policies

Group Health and Safety Policy



Health and Well-being Week

Following on from the 2022/23 international well-being survey, we recognised significant geographic variations in the understanding of well-being and what employees needed. Therefore, rather than implementing uniform minimum well-being programmes across the business we encouraged sites to evaluate and enhance their offerings and drive their own programmes.

In 2023/24, we held our Company-wide Health and Well-being Week with the theme of 'Body'. Over 600 events were held across the business aimed at enhancing nutrition, physical activity, mental health, and piloting innovative ideas, such as yoga classes, sleep seminars, manual handling training and on-demand webinars.

A survey found 81 per cent of respondents planned to do something different to boost their well-being owing to the week. In 2024/25, we will continue to promote activities and tools to help all employees learn the necessary skills, experience and knowledge to promote work-life balance and increase their well-being.

Managing Health and Safety

All employees and third parties, including contractors and visitors, are required to always adhere to our Health and Safety policies and procedures, including emergency action plans, at all of our sites. Manufacturing sites have a Health and Safety Committee, composed of both management and employee representatives, as per our internal standards and in compliance with local laws.

Audits

All our operational sites are subject to regular internal and external audits, which identify risks and drive health and safety improvements.

Management systems

All our sites maintain health and safety management systems. These are certified to ISO 45001 at 33 per cent of our sites, and 66 per cent of our mills.

Performance management

Our sites report monthly performance with reactive and proactive KPIs, such as the health and safety engagement rate. Our long-term target is zero accidents (Vision Zero). Accidents are investigated and the findings are circulated throughout the business as appropriate.

Risk and hazard assessment

We strive to control hazards using a risk-based approach, with a hierarchy of measures. We aim to continuously improve proactive mitigation. Any observations or raised concerns are addressed openly and promptly.

Training

We provide comprehensive information, instruction, training and supervision. Our aim is that 100 per cent of employees and third parties undertake some form of required health and safety training, depending on the activities they are required to carry out.

We have issued a range of internal Group minimum standards, covering topics such as handling chemicals, lifting equipment and spills.

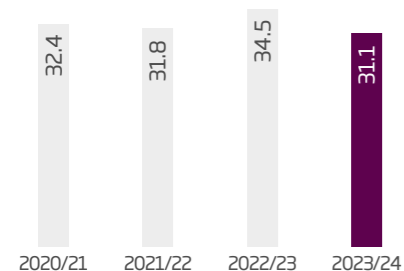
Diversity, equity and inclusion

By 2030, improve gender diversity towards 40 per cent women in senior leadership and set an aspiration for other protected characteristics¹

We are committed to building the diversity of our workforce to better reflect the communities we operate in. Together we create an inclusive environment where everyone is able to realise their own individual potential and thrive. This is fundamental for any successful company and crucial to our strategic goal 'to realise the potential of our people'.

We have continued to make progress on our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategy throughout 2023/24.

Percentage of senior leadership, female employees (%)^{*}



^{*} Senior leadership is defined in accordance with the requirements of the FTSE Women Leaders Review as those on our four Executive Committees - Global Operating Committee; Global Strategy Committee; M&A Committee; and H&S, Environment and Sustainability Committee - and their direct reports.

What do we mean by Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)?

- **Diversity** is defined as the range of human characteristics within the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical or mental ability, religious or ethical values systems, national origin and political beliefs. It also includes diverse thinking and neurodiversity.
- **Equity** means providing everyone with what they need to succeed, recognising that not everyone starts from the same place.
- **Inclusion** describes how people feel about their experience at DS Smith, whether they feel it promotes and sustains a sense of belonging.

The impact of DEI on our leaders and people

Being known as an inclusive organisation will help us to attract and retain, as well as enhance the diversity of talent we need and deliver our business plan.

To accelerate progress, we have three immediate focuses:

- **Investing in leaders**
- **Raising awareness through our Active Networks**
- **Inclusive people processes**



By 2025, inclusive leadership workshops completed by all leadership teams across all sites

This will provide the cultural awareness and understanding needed to role-model inclusive behaviours and recruit and manage diverse teams. We will take 3,000+ people managers and leaders through a facilitated journey exploring what DEI means to them and the Company, focusing on actions that will make an impact.

Our approach to inclusive leadership is two-fold. We are working with 'Included', a global, impact-driven DEI consultancy, to enable our most senior leaders to become role models for a more diverse business. We are also rolling out a similar internal programme, focused on the meaning and practical application of DEI and unconscious bias, with an emphasis on action planning to drive inclusive leadership. Our in-house facilitators will deliver this programme in local languages to our wider management populations to meet the various cultural needs of our business. To date, 25 per cent of our leaders have completed this internal programme.

Raising awareness through our Active Networks

Active Networks foster a sense of belonging, creating a safe and supportive space for employees who share a common sense of identity. They offer a platform for members to openly discuss their experiences and perspectives, leading to greater empathy and understanding throughout our business.

Active Networks also promote greater awareness through various means including building an annual calendar to support important dates and celebrations within their respective communities.

During 2023/24, our Active Network membership increased, on average, by over 60 per cent, with more than 350 members participating to date, reflecting our colleagues' commitment to championing positive change. Our networks include:

- **LGBTQ+ & Allies Network**
- **Culture & Ethnic Diversity Network**
- **Gender Diversity Network**
- **Disability & Allies Network**



"As chair of the Culture & Ethnic Diversity Network, I am grateful to work with a passionate team of colleagues. We engage our organisation in conversations about important DEI topics, such as intersectionality and race, as well as celebrate different cultural and religious events. I have learned so much in my role as chair, and I am motivated to educate my colleagues about difference, encourage allyship, and foster inclusivity within DS Smith."

Jessica Heap
Chair of the Culture & Ethnic Diversity Network

Diversity, equity and inclusion continued

Our Active Networks

In June 2023 we established an internal DEI Steering Committee (Steerco) to enable alignment and knowledge-sharing among our four Active Networks.

Through collaboration on the DEI Steerco and with the support of their executive sponsors, the Active Networks have written charters and co-created a schedule of coffee breaks and webinars. On behalf of the LGBTQ+ & Allies Network, we joined Workplace Pride as a member in May 2023 to further drive LGBTQ+ inclusion at work. The Active Networks have also worked alongside the European Works Council (EWC) to increase DEI engagement among non-wired colleagues through establishing a community of DEI Site Champions.

To support our Active Networks and inclusive leadership workshops, we have developed digital resources, including an Active Network toolkit and a manager's guide on how to lead inclusively.

Our Manager's Guide to Diversity Equity and Inclusion helps our managers learn more about diversity, equity and inclusion at DS Smith and how to foster a culture of inclusion in their teams. The guide discusses DEI in depth, including a glossary of key DEI terms, guidance on how to lead with inclusion during the recruitment process and tips for creating belonging among teams.

The content in this guide has been developed in response to the feedback we received in listening sessions with leaders and includes topics they wanted to learn about and understand to better enhance their teams.



International Pronouns Day workshop

The LGBTQ+ & Allies Network partnered with Workplace Pride to deliver an interactive workshop for colleagues to learn about the importance of using pronouns to cultivate a psychologically safe and inclusive space for members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies. Education is a key component to ensure all employees feel valued and respected to bring their best to work. The network sponsor Paul Brown, Managing Director, Paper Supply & Procurement, attended the workshop with his leadership team, welcoming all participants and highlighting the importance of inclusive language. One attendee stated:

"The workshop was insightful and whilst it may not feel necessary for me, it might make someone else feel more comfortable."



International Women's Day workshop at Lucca

In honour of International Women's Day, our DEI Site Champions at Lucca paper mill organised a workshop to raise awareness and challenge gender-based discrimination and harassment.

Participating in Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna's Engine Project, workshop attendees listened to an interactive presentation on patriarchy and gender equality in Italy. They then had the opportunity to experience gender-based micro-aggressions through virtual reality.



Neurodiversity Celebration Week

To commemorate Neurodiversity Celebration Week, the Disability & Allies Network hosted an informative and engaging roundtable with award-winning Neurodiversity Consultant Rachel-Morgan Trimmer.

In sharing her personal experiences and explaining neurodiversity, Rachel led a conversation on how we all play a role in creating an inclusive and accessible workplace for people living with ADHD, Dyslexia Autism, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, as well as neurotypicals.

Diversity, equity and inclusion continued



Inclusive people processes

We are actively reviewing our people processes to ensure alignment to our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion ambition.

For example, our Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination, and Menopause policies are being embedded through training and awareness campaigns.

We ensure that we recruit diverse candidates who can challenge us and help to drive us forward. This has enabled our female to male hiring ratio to increase for three years in a row.

[See DS Smith Diversity, Equity & Inclusion for more information on our commitment](#)

Information and policies

[Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Policy](#)

[Board Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)

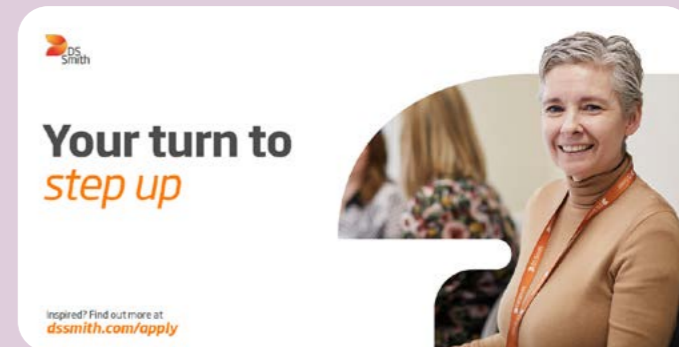
Attraction, recruitment and onboarding

Attraction

We have refreshed our employee brand and careers website. We want to attract the talent we need, including graduates, and provide more visibility of the careers we have to offer.

Our messaging is simple and clear: 'We believe that a better, more sustainable and inclusive tomorrow is possible when we bring together the right people'.

We are united by a shared purpose, where we support and challenge each other to make a difference.



Recruitment

We are implementing Workday Recruitment & Onboarding across our European countries. This will drive consistency and standardisation for the hiring process and improve candidate experience across the business.

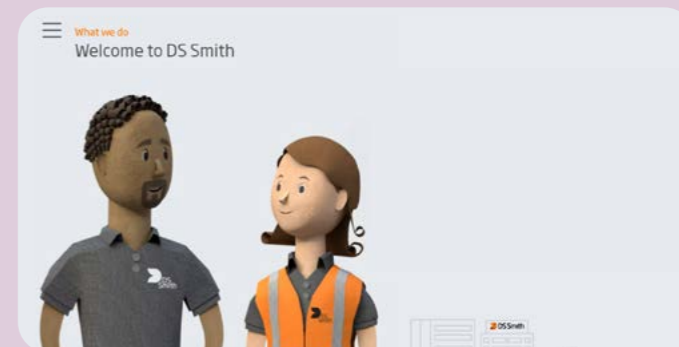
By bringing our Talent Acquisition employees together in a forum of continuous improvement, we strive to improve attraction, engagement and selection processes for a more diverse population of candidates with a variety of skills, talent and experience.



Onboarding

We have designed and implemented improvements to our onboarding experience to ensure new employees feel engaged and are enabled to be productive in their new roles, as quickly as possible.

These improvements include a redesigned onboarding process, onboarding e-learning, which is available in 11 core languages, and an onboarding hub, in which individuals can access all the key information, processes and tools they need as a new starter.



Engaging our people

Engaging our people

Listening to employee feedback is a critical part of our engagement strategy. Labour markets have become increasingly competitive and, in response, we have refreshed our approach.

In 2023/24, we continued to use pulse surveys and gave more frequent opportunities for our employees to provide feedback and drive action. Follow-up listening sessions were then organised for feedback discussions and agreed actions.

Further improvements to our listening approach have been introduced over the past 12 months, including better guidance and support for managers on how to use survey insights, clearer reporting and action planning. Online idea boards were also introduced this year, enabling suggestions for improvement to be crowd sourced.

In total over 12,000 employees were surveyed in 2023/24, with a response rate of 84 per cent versus 72 per cent in 2021.

Despite a challenging external environment and labour market and the changing expectations of the workforce, we have seen marked improvements in perceptions.

Recognition has had a 9-point increase, due in part to our continued focus on our Smithies programme, which celebrates the fantastic achievements of our colleagues. We have also seen a further increase in inclusion, a 5-point increase, and safety, a 4-point increase.

At site level there has been a clear commitment to improvement. For example, between 2021 and 2023, our Birmingham packaging plant engagement increased from 46 per cent to 83 per cent, 9 per cent above the external norm. Through acting on employee feedback, it is now our most engaged site in North Europe.

“The site has come on leaps and bounds. The site leadership, led by a fantastic General Manager, listens to the shop floor and gets their opinions.”

Employee
Birmingham packaging plant

In 2024/25, we will continue to run frequent, targeted pulse surveys, giving opportunities for our employees to provide regular feedback and drive action. We will also introduce opportunities for employees to voice their opinions on important experiences during their tenure with us, beginning with onboarding.

Manager capability is at the heart of our People & Communities pillar, within our DEI Strategy, and we continue to embed our DS Smith Management Standards, outlining a clear and consistent set of accountabilities and management development programmes.

Our Operations, Sales, Marketing and Innovation, Finance and Digital Learning Academies have delivered learning, expanding their coverage, with our Operations Learning Academy expanding across all regions delivering thought-provoking real-life operational training scenarios in Digital and Virtual Reality. Additionally, our Sales, Marketing and Innovation Academy completed over 7,000 learning interventions during the year.

We continue to invest in our learning platform, and in 2023/24, we added new content, expanded the number of languages available and launched conversation AI functionality for 60+ subjects, allowing employees to practise their skills with an AI coach.

84%

average employee survey response rate

7,000+

learning interventions with the Innovation Academy

60+

AI coach enabled subjects



Birmingham packaging plant

European Works Council (EWC)

Our EWC, which includes 50 representatives from across the business, engages twice a year with management to provide further feedback and discuss opportunities to improve.

Regular engagement with regional leads, as well as both safety and diversity committees, ensures we have a regular two-way dialogue on employee matters across Europe.

“The EWC ensures that employees’ opinions are listened to at Group, Divisional and Regional levels. The feedback given to management is taken seriously and we can influence policies and guidelines set across Europe and the entire Group. ‘Yes we can!’ best describes my experience in the DS Smith EWC.”

Joseph B. Reed
European Works Council Chairman
EWC Coordinator



Aspire and Compass

Oxford Saïd Business School emphasises the development of leaders who drive meaningful change in businesses and, consequently, create transformational impact in the world.

Working with Oxford Saïd Business School, we continue to run programmes which are designed to accelerate the development of high potential talents. Of the 200 people who have participated in our Oxford Saïd Aspire programmes, since the launch in 2021, 30 per cent of participants are female.

We have also developed a new internal programme, Compass, targeted at developing people earlier in their careers. Additionally, we have identified development opportunities for high potential female talent to support career development.

Since starting Compass in 2023 we have 60 people who have participated in the programme of whom 46 per cent are female. Data continues to show a significant return on investment in terms of promotions and retention rates from both groups.

Our commitment to talent development

Graduate development programme

Graduates continue to be critical to our succession strategy and we have seen a marked increased interest in applications this year. We are delighted that three successful candidates onto our 2024 programme have come from within DS Smith.

We currently have over 70 graduates attending our two-year personal development programme which is fully aligned to their professional development journey.

Our graduate development programme was shortlisted for the British HR Awards 2024 'L&D Initiative of the Year', with two further finalist places of 'Best People Experience' & 'Manufacturing & Engineering Company of the Year' following feedback from our graduates.

These nominations resulted in DS Smith's graduate programme winning 'Manufacturing & Engineering Company of the Year'.



Winner

Manufacturing and Engineering Company of the Year

Nominated for:

**L&D Initiative of the Year
Best Overall People Experience**



"I had access to development opportunities within my rotations but also external to my role."

Radhika Joshi
2022, Procurement Graduate

How does DS Smith support your own career growth?

Since joining DS Smith in September 2022, not only have I had access to development opportunities within my rotations but also external to my role.

Reflecting on my own developmental journey, some of the key opportunities have included peer mentoring and being involved within the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Active Networks. Being involved in DS Smith's journey in embracing diversity, promoting equity and fostering inclusion has been incredibly rewarding and insightful.

What skills or qualifications have you been able to study?

From day one, DS Smith has provided a supportive and dynamic environment where I have had the opportunity to grow, develop and manage meaningful projects. Leading these projects has not only given me a great insight into DS Smith, but has also helped me develop fundamental procurement skills and values. The true highlight of DS Smith is that skill development is not simply limited to rotations.

I have also had the opportunity to start my professional Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply qualification.

Would you recommend the graduate programme?

There are a multitude of development opportunities available at DS Smith and my key advice to anyone considering the programme would be to be proactive and make the most out of these opportunities.



"There is a supportive community dedicated to career development."

Maxamed Duran
2021, Sales, Marketing & Innovation Graduate

How does DS Smith support your own career growth?

The availability of learning resources and clearly defined development paths is testimony to DS Smith's dedication to the growth of its people. Each manager and mentor I've encountered has not only expressed an interest in nurturing my current role but has provided the tools and guidance necessary for me to progress towards my next career milestone.

What skills and experiences have you gained?

Through this journey, I have gained insights into my professional profile, developed the skills to navigate challenging conversations, and developed my ability to deliver impactful presentations.

As an SMI graduate, I have had the privilege of gaining exposure to various parts of the business and leading big projects with the support of my manager, which has helped me expand my professional network.

Would you recommend the graduate programme?

I highly recommend the graduate programme, particularly for those seeking a dynamic work environment. It offers invaluable insights into key business areas and equips individuals with the necessary tools for personal and professional growth.

My advice is to remain curious and embrace challenges. There is a supportive community dedicated to career development at DS Smith, providing invaluable insights into the packaging industry.



"There are ample opportunities to network with people from all over the organisation."

Paloma de Palacios McGrath
2021, Finance Graduate

What skills and experiences have you gained?

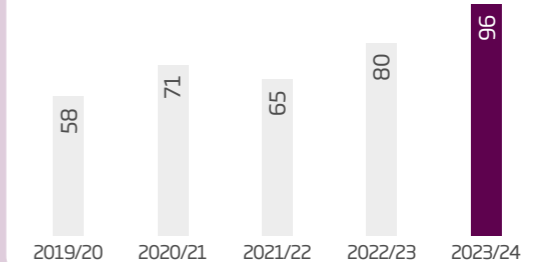
Throughout my Graduate programme I have had the opportunity to work in different parts of the business, in different countries, allowing me to gain a thorough understanding of how DS Smith operates.

Alongside my rotations I have had the chance to complete a professional Chartered Institute of Management Accounting qualification, join multiple insightful learning and development modules and I am now starting a Data and Digital Apprenticeship.

Would you recommend the graduate programme?

I would highly recommend the Finance Graduate programme as it offers ample opportunities to learn and grow professionally, as well as network with people from all over the organisation.

Completion rate of graduate programme (%)



Our commitment to talent development continued

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes combining on-the-job training with formal off-the-job learning. We currently have 114 live learners on apprenticeships ranging from Engineering to Accountancy. In the last 12 months, 42 employees completed apprenticeship programmes, taking our total number to 211 since their introduction in 2017.

Of these completed apprenticeships, 84 have been in Leadership and Management courses, with a further 53 live learners in this area. These figures highlight how apprenticeships are helping to develop our current and future leaders within the business, equipping new managers with the skills needed to lead teams.

Apprenticeships are a fantastic way for employers to develop their talent internally, as well as for individuals to develop skills and work experience whilst gaining a qualification. We can attract and retain a skilled workforce by offering apprenticeships, which provides us with a diverse group of skilled workers with relevant skills.



“Apprenticeships play a key part in our learning & development strategy. They not only enable us to bring fresh talent into the business but also enable us to continually upskill existing DS Smith colleagues, providing them with career opportunities and enhancing our own future workforce.”

Oliver Churchill
Early Careers Manager

Information and policies

For more information on our Apprenticeship and Graduate programmes see www.dssmith.com/uk/careers/students-and-graduates



Sara Blout
Packaging Sales Manager

“The apprenticeship has been fundamental in my development and promotion through the Company and where I am today.”

What is your apprenticeship?

I have just completed the postgraduate diploma in senior leadership practice through the Open University.

How is the apprenticeship aiding your development?

I think the apprenticeship itself has given me the management concepts and learning to enhance the practical experience that I've gained whilst moving through my current role into a leadership role. It's really supported my personal development and contributed to my confidence in moving into a people management position. I think it's made me a better leader.

How have you managed your workload while doing an apprenticeship?

It is about prioritising, allowing that time for study, making sure that you're strict with yourself. Keep positive and motivated.

I was fortunate to have a good cohort that I was able to share ideas with and we could experience the challenges together.

What advice would you give someone looking to do an apprenticeship?

Commit yourself to it. It has really given me a good foundation to now use to develop my career. I made sure I always spoke to my line manager and shared my experiences with them, asking for their feedback.

For me it's been a great and enjoyable experience.



Joe Coote
Packaging Account Manager

“You get out what you put in, if you give your all to the apprenticeship and your role, you'll be successful.”

What is your apprenticeship?

I completed the Sales Executive Level 4 apprenticeship over a two-year period. I had good work experience from working in sales but the apprenticeship taught me beneficial ways of dealing with certain situations.

It's relevant for the day-to-day, and you can take what you learn and use it to good effect in real life situations. For example, the apprenticeship covered negotiations and dealing with customers, both of those are daily tasks in my role.

How does DS Smith support you?

The Company has been very supportive of my apprenticeship, my manager is a big advocate of apprenticeships and understands what is needed to be successful.

What advice would you give to someone looking to do an apprenticeship?

I would say grab the opportunity! Be 100 per cent open minded. You will learn a lot and be able to link it to your job.

I wanted to start working straight away and doing an apprenticeship gave me the opportunity to learn on the job whilst getting paid as well. The experience I learned from working on the job was invaluable.



Josephine Cooper
Apprentice Packaging Technician

“I know the business will support me in my studies and in my personal development.”

What attracted you to DS Smith?

I went on a school trip to a DS Smith site. I was impressed at the scale of the manufacturing process. A few years later I saw DS Smith were advertising. As a Company, I felt they were passionate about partnering with brands to reduce packaging waste and increase sustainability. I think it's important to work for a company which aligns with personal values.

What apprenticeship course are you doing?

I'm on the Packaging Professional Degree apprenticeship course at Sheffield Hallam University. The course is designed for people across the whole packaging industry as it aims to give a wide understanding of the different materials, processes, companies and related job roles.

How does DS Smith support you?

It was daunting to relocate to start my job, but the team made me feel welcome and supported from the beginning. Over the last few years, I have been given the space to grow both as an individual and into my role. I have been given the freedom to explore where my strengths and interests lie.

What advice would you give to someone looking to do an apprenticeship?

Whilst gaining invaluable workplace experience, I'm getting a degree and earning simultaneously, which is enabling me to reach my goals.

It's really rewarding to see how far I have progressed and I'm proud of all I have achieved so far.



Respect human rights


100%

of in-scope sites completed Sedex SAQ¹

As the importance of the circular economy continues to increase, the spotlight is placed on sourcing and supply chains, bringing into focus where and how products and materials are made, and by whom.

As an international employer of approximately 29,000 people, supported by thousands more in our extensive supply chains, we have a responsibility to respect and uphold human rights.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery both within our own operations and in our supply chains with effective measures in place to promote human rights and prevent modern slavery.



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Protecting labour rights, promoting safe and secure working environments and eradicating modern slavery.

2023/24 highlights

0

known human rights breaches²

1. The Sedex SAQ (Supplier Ethical Data Exchange Self-Assessment Questionnaire) is a set of questions relating to business practices, management systems, policies and worker information. The scope includes manufacturing sites.
2. Number of known human rights breaches as a result of our operations, including incidents of violations to the rights of indigenous people.

Respect human rights

By 2025, complete Sedex SAQ (Self Assessment Questionnaire) roll out to all of our sites and perform appropriate auditing of SAQs

In 2023/24, we continued to roll out the Sedex (Supplier Ethical Data Exchange) Self Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) to all our operational sites.

By the end of 2023/24, we achieved the roll out to all of our sites in scope one year ahead of target, with 100 per cent of our operational sites¹ completing the SEDEX SAQ, with appropriate auditing of SAQs in place.

The delivery of this target has been a cross-functional collaborative effort, driven by actively engaging with our Human Resources and Operational employees at divisional, country and site-level.

Led by our Group HR and Group Sustainability functions, multiple training webinars were delivered following the introduction of Sedex's new Goods Provider SAQ, with ongoing guidance and support provided throughout project deployment.

We will continue to complete the Sedex SAQ on an annual basis as part of our ongoing commitment to improving our human rights due diligence.

Assessing and managing risk relating to human rights

In order to perform appropriate auditing, we analysed our site-level SAQ responses and calibrated responses to reflect our working practices across our sites and the countries in which they operate. From this, we created a risk-rated heatmap to identify trends and give visibility to the areas where we are strong, and areas where there are potential opportunities to improve as part of our ongoing human rights due diligence. This accompanies on-site Sedex SMETA (Supplier Member Ethical Trade Audit) at a selection of sites. In 2024/25, we will establish a baseline for SAQ risk scoring and completion across all operational sites and include Sedex SAQ focused checks within our Human Rights and Business Ethics internal audit process.

Our commitment to human rights protects our people and gives our customers the transparency and visibility they require to help them also identify and manage risk within their own supply chain.

"In 2023/24, we undertook human rights deep dive assessments at three of our operational sites. Connecting directly with workers provides insights into their experiences working for DS Smith and identifies opportunities for improvement at both a local and global level."

Paul Adams
Human Resources Director

Continue to improve human rights due diligence each year

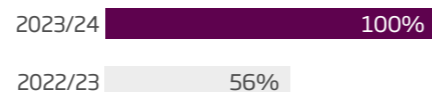
Human Rights Policy

Our policy outlines our commitments and responsibility to respect human rights. It applies to all DS Smith operations and employees and governs all our business dealings and the conduct of all persons or organisations with whom we contract directly or who we appoint to act on our behalf.

Human rights governance

A multi-disciplinary Modern Slavery and Human Rights Committee, supported by a working group, reports to our Group Operating Committee (GOC). The GOC is chaired by our Group Chief Executive, who has ultimate responsibility for human rights due diligence. The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Committee steers action and monitors progress, embedding due diligence across the business and supply chain. The working group reports to this committee quarterly and is responsible for the delivery of our programme of work on human rights.

Percentage of sites completed Sedex SAQ (%)^{*}



^{*} The Sedex SAQ (Supplier Ethical Data Exchange Self-Assessment Questionnaire) is a set of questions relating to business practices, management systems, policies and worker information. The scope includes manufacturing sites.

Our human rights focus areas

We respect the fundamental human rights of all people, complying with all legal requirements. We have strong policies, procedures and other actions in place to mitigate any potential risks in the following five human rights categories:

Forced labour and child labour

We have a zero-tolerance approach to forced and/or child labour of any kind within our operations and our supply chain. Our Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy sets our policy for managing modern slavery risk.

Health and safety

Health and safety is our top priority and we strive for continuous improvement to achieve our target of zero harm. We are committed to ensuring that our products and operations are safe and this extends to contractors and visitors to our sites.

Wages and working hours

We do not employ people below the minimum wage at which the applicable local law permits the relevant work type to be undertaken. We are committed to monitoring and taking action to reduce excessive working hours, and to support flexible working arrangements where possible.

Freedom of association

It is a fundamental right of employees to have the freedom of association and collective bargaining. We recognise and respect the rights employees have under local and transnational laws, including, where applicable, the right to collective representation and bargaining, with no detriment arising from involvement in legitimate trade union activities.

Discrimination

We are committed to promoting equal opportunities and pride ourselves on building a culture with a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

→ [See pages 67-68 for more information on our approach to responsible business and business ethics](#)

Support for international frameworks

Recent global trends have emphasised why human rights matter so much and as an international manufacturer in the paper and packaging industry involved in sourcing, manufacturing and recycling, we have the potential to impact human rights in our operations and supply chain.

We are committed to all fundamental human rights and standards, including:

- The UN Sustainable Development Goals
- The ten principles of the United Nations Global Compact
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
- The International Labour Organization's (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- The United Nations International Convention on the elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Information and policies

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Global Supplier Standard \(GSS\)](#)

[Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy](#)

[Human Rights Policy](#)

[Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Policy](#)




Engage our people & communities

9.8 million
people engaged on the circular economy since 2020/21

Raising awareness, teaching skills and showing our commitment to action are essential to enabling our people and communities to meaningfully participate in the transition to the circular economy. Together we can progress further and faster with the confidence and understanding needed to lead the change.

Engaging our people and communities aids employee development and the continued prosperity of our people and local communities. As an international employer, we can equip our people and communities with useful resources, particularly to promote sustainable development.



Engaging our people and communities contributes to promoting sustainable development.

2023/24 highlights

100%

of sites participating in community activities in 2023/24 for the 5th year running*

Launched our Community & Engagement working group

enabling greater visibility of engagement

76%

of our people engaged on the circular economy

* Sites with greater than 50 full-time employees.

Engage our people & communities

By 2025, engage 100 per cent of our people on the circular economy

In 2023/24, we reached 76 per cent of our people on the circular economy (2022/23: 57 per cent). We will continue to reach our remaining colleagues throughout 2024/25, focusing on non-wired employees.

Our continued ambition to engage all of our people on the circular economy encourages a continuous focus on circularity, both in their personal and daily working lives. We aim to equip our people to lead change individually, as well as with our customers, communities and others.

During 2023/24, we held team briefings, quizzes for employees and provided resources, such as e-learning modules. Colleagues in Benelux developed a Sustainability Awareness Training delivering sessions to customer service and supply chain teams at local sites to understand and drive circularity, both at home and at work.

Thanks to this training, our Benelux sites have developed roadmaps to support in leading the transition to a low-carbon, circular economy, and raising awareness of how we all, as individuals and a business, can contribute. We look forward to making this training available across the business in 2024/25.

We continued to provide opportunities for our people by offering selected places on the Circular Economy Masterclass, delivered by the University of Exeter Business School and supported by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

By 2030, engage 10 million people on the circular economy and circular lifestyles

From visits to circular economy content on our website, to views on videos and clicks on social media posts, we have made significant progress on our journey to engage 10 million people on the circular economy and circular lifestyles.

Our circular economy lesson plan has been downloaded and delivered to over 9,000 students in 2023/24 alone. We have engaged people on circularity through hosting a circular design challenge with students, regional media and radio coverage and sustainability festival attendance.

This brings our cumulative total to 9.8 million people engaged since 2020/21.



Circular Design Challenge with the University of Exeter

As the corporate sponsor of the University of Exeter's 2023 MBA Circular Economy Challenge, we invited enterprising students to take part in a week-long design sprint to inspire a new way of thinking about sustainable packaging. Students heard from DS Smith experts in sustainability, innovation, design and e-commerce to deepen their understanding of the industry dynamics and challenges.

The MBA students were given a circular economy challenge to create a reusable packaging system for e-commerce and white goods, catering for our changing world.

“The Circular Economy Masterclass and Challenge sponsored by DS Smith were an excellent introduction to the concept of the circular economy. It gave the students an opportunity to apply learnings to a tangible challenge, working with real-world complexities.”

Dr. Merryn Haines-Gadd
Research Associate in Circular Economy and Design,
University of Exeter Business School



Seasonal tips for more recycling

Paper recycling in the UK has improved, but more still needs to be done. Source segregation is the answer to improve recycling rates to ensure the quality of material is high.

Timed with seasonal celebrations, significant amounts of packaging and wrapping paper can be found in consumers' homes, we carried out research to support recycling over the Christmas and Easter periods.

Our colleague, Samantha Upham, was featured in regional media and radio coverage sharing recycling tips to help people do more effectively.

“Avoid cards with glitter, plastic or electrical components as these are tricky to recycle. Don't forget to separate the plastic windows from the cardboard box, remove any chocolate residue and make sure they are put in the correct bins.”

Samantha Upham
Senior Sustainability Manager



'Wishcycling' panel at EA Sustain festival

We participated in a variety of workshops, events and forums over the past year, including EA Sustain in January.

Aiming to educate and awaken through combining environment, culture and entrepreneurship and featuring leaders in environment, creativity and business, our Group Chief Executive, Miles Roberts, participated in a panel discussion.

The panel considered recycling, 'Wishcycling' and the disconnect between what we expect for product placed in recycle bins and the reality. The panel discussed the obstacles to increasing recycling rates of both paper and plastic and the need to introduce new nomenclature to modify cultural attitudes towards waste.

Miles provided expertise on paper recycling rates for paper and cardboard packaging across Europe and the findings in our report, Wasted Paper: A Path to Better Recycling (see page 21 for more information).

The discussion provided a valuable platform and opportunity to engage a local community on recyclability.

[Watch the panel discussion here](#)

Communities

100 per cent of our sites engaged in community activities each year¹

We operate in numerous international communities. We therefore have a significant opportunity and responsibility to make a positive, local difference where we operate.

We believe a strong Community Programme not only supports local causes, builds relationships with stakeholder groups and raises the profile of our sites, but also engages and motivates our people.

By providing opportunities outside day-to-day roles, our people have the opportunity to serve and contribute to the communities in which they often live and work.

In 2023/24, 100 per cent of the sites in scope for our Community Programme² engaged with their communities for the fifth year running.

The launch of our Community & Engagement Working Group has enabled greater visibility on target progress and in the future will lead to more strategic alignment of community activities.

Some sites build on activities delivered in previous years in their local community, to continue to strengthen relationships with local stakeholders and to develop a recognised and anticipated event in the local calendar.

Activities included teaching various schools about the circular economy and the importance of biodiversity, creating and donating our designed products for community events, and volunteering in nature reserves to enhance biodiversity.

1. Sites with greater than 50 full-time employees.

2. Estimated using the B4SI Framework - see DS Smith ESG Databook 2024 for methodology.

3. Includes cash donated by the DS Smith Charitable Foundation.

Our community themes

We have an ambitious, Company-wide Community Programme because we believe that as a responsible and sustainable business, investing in the communities where we operate is the right thing to do.

Our sites support a range of causes, often unique and creative ideas in response to the needs of the local communities.

Our three main strategic themes are:



Biodiversity

Improving the environment for plants and animals, protecting natural habitats, and enhancing the diversity of species within the areas in which we operate.



Education

Inspiring and educating our communities and future generations on sustainability and the role of the circular economy.



Design

Using our unique expertise to inspire and stimulate creativity within the community through design and/or offering donations of DS Smith designed products for the benefit of community causes.



326

projects delivered to support local communities

33K

members of our local community engaged

£179K

time contributions

£357K

management costs

£6K

in-kind contributions, including product donations

£689K

cash contributions³





Community programme theme: biodiversity



'Let's Do It, Romania!' with Zărnești mill

In September 2023, our Zărnești paper mill in Romania joined the annual 'Let's Do It, Romania!' campaign.

The campaign, celebrated alongside World Clean Up Day, encourages Romanians to care for the environment and clean up the planet by picking up litter and combating the mismanaged waste crisis.

Organised together with the local community, the event brought together around 80 participants, including employees from Zărnești mill and students from local schools with whom the mill partners.

Volunteers collected an impressive 400kg of waste from three tourist and residential areas in Braşov County: Gura Râului, Plaiul Foi and the Bârsa River area in Zărnești.

"We are delighted once again join the 'Let's Do It, Romania!' campaign and contribute to caring for the environment in which we live and work. We are thrilled to see so many volunteers, including children, enthusiastically involved in the action. We aspire to be a role model for social and environmental responsibility, and this activity is part of our ongoing commitment to a cleaner, greener future."

Diana Ciuraru
Human Resources Director at Zărnești



Support for a nature reserve in Diegem, Belgium

Diegem packaging Head office and Tour and Taxis, Brussels, Belgium, wanted to reinforce team spirit and bring together the different teams through an activity in their local community, whilst supporting and enhancing biodiversity through a partnership with Natagora.

Natagora, a local conservation association, aims to protect nature in Wallonia and Brussels, with the main objective to halt the degradation of biodiversity and restore a good general state of nature, in balance with human activities.

In March 2024, a group of 24 employees cleared access roads in the reserve, pruned and uprooted exotic plant species and cleared vegetation along the fences of grazed plots.

The day received great enthusiasm and feedback from all participants with eagerness to organise further activities.



Tree planting festival in Timișoara, Romania

In May 2023, Timișoara box plant supported Codru Planting, a local festival that promotes foresting and ecological activities.

Employees and their families volunteered alongside other companies, NGOs and the local community in tree planting activities over two days.

Volunteers were guided by a specialist who provided a lesson on local tree species, their importance to local biodiversity, the process of planting and how to ensure the seedling survives and flourishes over time.

It was a great opportunity for our colleagues to contribute to forest regeneration in the area, learn about biodiversity and spend time together as a team.



Community programme theme: education



School visit at Ștefănești, Romania

Pupils from the Afumati City Elementary School were invited to visit our Ștefănești recycling site to learn about the recycling process.

The visit began with the site's safety procedures and providing pupils with safety caps so that they felt like part of the team for the day. The pupils learned about the recycling process, from the delivery of the cardboard waste and its sorting, baling and storage, to the transportation to our paper mill.

Those leading the tour spoke about circularity and waste segregation, and the class understood that this same process can be carried out in their homes and classrooms. The children were very receptive, asking questions about the difference between cardboard boxes and fibres.

During the tour, the children learned about the necessity of destroying documents when seeing the shredder.



They learned that notebooks from their school can be recycled and their teacher proposed a recycling contest at their school to recycle used books and notepads.

Colleagues at the site bought books about recycling, climate change and our planet for the pupils to read and share with their classmates.

The following day, the pupils brought hundreds of old notebooks to school to be recycled, which the site collected. The class teacher contacted the Ștefănești team to thank them for their efforts in teaching and challenging the children to recycle.

Following the success of this visit our employees at Ștefănești are keen to replicate the experience and activities and have organised visits with other local schools in the area.



'The Little Heroes' launch with Pazardzhik, Bulgaria

In December 2023, colleagues in our Pazardzhik packaging plant, in cooperation with Detelina kindergarten in the village of Patalenitsa and groups in the villages of Debrashtitsa and Tsrancha, created a three-day adventure called 'The Little Heroes: How to Take Care of Nature', which attracted the attention and participation of more than 40 children from the local community.

The children were engaged through our Circular Economy Lesson Plan, 'Let's Go Circular!', featuring a variety of everyday examples and engaging videos, and finished with hand-painting a cardboard corrugated tree.

To enhance their understanding of waste separation, a game called 'Put Me in the Right Colour Bin!' was organised. Each child received a custom-made crown featuring a picture of a product that they then had to recycle in the appropriate bins, provided by the team.



This project not only enabled the children to understand the difference between the linear and circular economies, but also the importance of recycling to protect our finite, natural resources.

"Planting seeds of environmental care in young minds and hearts was an unforgettable and joyful experience! We were privileged to inspire over 40 little heroes, aged five to seven, who eagerly embraced sustainability with enthusiasm, helping to foster a brighter, greener future they can contribute towards."

Tanya Stoyanova
Subregional Communications Manager



Community programme theme: education continued



Biodiversity lesson plan launch in Atlanta and Riceboro, USA

The Atlanta Head Office contributed funds in partnership with the DS Smith Charitable Foundation to develop and deliver the Biodiversity Rangers lesson plan to middle grade students.

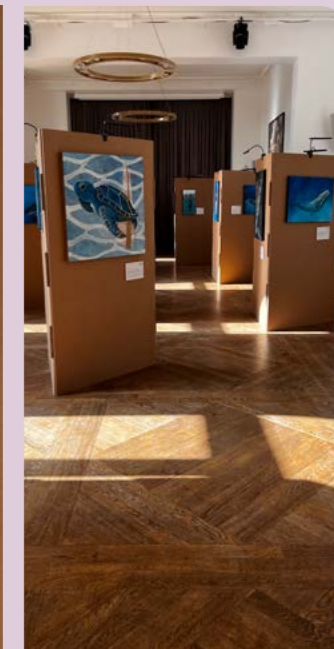
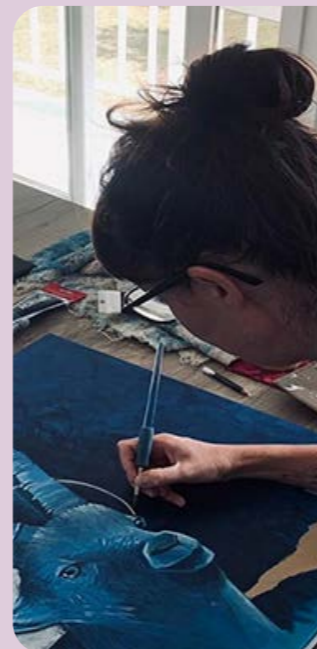
The lesson plan discusses the importance of biodiversity, and how we can contribute to its growth. Students were engaged by the content and thoroughly enjoyed the activities, including cards to construct a food web in a pine forest.

Our Riceboro paper mill team also worked with the local South Effingham Middle School to educate students about our efforts to enhance biodiversity. The students signed the 'DS Smith Biodiversity Rangers Pledge', promising to look after nature. The pledge is on a seed paper card, so students could sign it, rip it up, and plant it in the ground to grow native wildflowers.

The funds provided by the Foundation are being used to contribute towards biodiversity projects implemented by the students, including installing bat boxes and butterfly bushes in their outdoor eating area to encourage pollinators and limit mosquito populations.

Sustainability education is one of our focus areas for community engagement and the biodiversity lesson plan has helped us educate many students about issues important to us.

So far, we have reached over 600 students in both North America and Spain and aim to reach more students in 2024/25.



AniMAUX art exhibition in Paris, France

In October 2023, we organised a captivating public art exhibition 'aniMAUX' at the GoodPlanet Foundation in Paris, featuring beautifully painted animals, displayed on cardboard.

Our employee, Servan Legoff, created these paintings of animals.

This exhibition not only enabled our employee to share their artwork and passion with the general public, but also educated visitors to the GoodPlanet Foundation.

The exhibition clearly demonstrated the challenges species are facing, the decline of biodiversity, and human impact on nature.

"I am a Product Manager at DS Smith but I am also an artist. The exhibition is two years of work for me. Thank you to DS Smith Packaging France for allowing me to express myself artistically on a common value, the Environment."

Servan Legoff
Key Account Product Manager

[View the exhibition here](#)



Community programme theme: design



'Make it! Race it! Recycle it! 2023' in Timișoara, Romania

The 'Make it! Race it! Recycle it!' annual event is held to promote sustainability among the local community in Timișoara, Romania.

We took part in the famous race down the Bega River in a ship created from recycled and recyclable materials. The team leveraged their design and innovation skills to support this local event. The boat impressed everyone, with its structural design, sailing speed and water resistance, and our team was awarded second place for Artistic Impression.

The team participated as an official partner of the event together with EcoStuff Romania and helped to prepare surprises for attendees.

One of the most popular creations was a temple, made from 100 per cent recycled corrugated cardboard and guarded by Egyptian pharaohs and Gods.

Employees posed for pictures and rewarded young visitors with chocolate gold coins.

The children had the opportunity to play with cardboard swords and shields, all made by the team. We provided the organisers with corrugated cardboard bins for selective waste collection so that the public could immediately practise their recycling habits at the event.

"I'm glad that we are part of a community involved in raising awareness of environmental issues. 'Make it! Race it! Recycle it!' is an unconventional sporting event that manages to reach people of all ages, who are informed in a very entertaining way about the importance of recycling. We are proud to be part of a community with which we share the same values."

Denisa Boar
Cluster Communications Manager



Support for Finland's largest aid event at Nummela, Finland

In November 2023, our design team and Nummela packaging plant produced and donated over 1,000 traditional cardboard boxes to Finland's largest aid event, '#1000tekoa' (1000 actions). This event is organised by Commu App, a free mobile app created to make helping people easier. The event distributed food to over 1,000 people in Helsinki.

We supported the event by designing, manufacturing and donating the boxes to enable food to be distributed to those in need. A QR code on the box directed attendees to download Commu's award-winning application and it also featured a hidden word puzzle to inspire good deeds.

"Our community's well-being plays a significant role in building a healthy society, that's why we supported this event by designing and donating packaging."

Ari Viinikkala
Managing Director of DS Smith Finland

"From designing and providing essential packaging for the #1000tekoa event goes, DS Smith embodies a commitment to making a difference and making tangible actions for social sustainability. Together, we gave out more than €50,000 worth of food for those in need and inspired nearly two million people to do good deeds. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for their unwavering support and for joining us in our mission to create positive change in local communities and nationally."

Karoliina Kauhanen
Founder of Commu App, Finland

Impact of the DS Smith Charitable Foundation

The DS Smith Charitable Foundation was established in 2011 and from its inception has supported a large variety of charitable causes and bodies.

We encourage employee involvement in charitable activities, whether making donations or giving their time and expertise to good causes, and will often support this by complementing employee fund-raising.



“The impact of the DS Smith Charitable Foundation is remarkable, both in the UK and in Europe. The funding

allows numerous projects in the fields of biodiversity, circular economy and poverty relief, leading to a positive impact on nature and people.”

Giulio Giannini
Head of Legal, Italy
Trustee of the DS Smith Charitable Foundation

£216K
worth of cash donations given by the DS Smith Charitable Foundation to support various projects



£172K
for environmental projects

39
donations given in 2023/24

9
countries supported



£44K
for educational projects



Supporting Liberty Bear Sanctuary in Zărnești, Romania

In October 2023, the Liberty Bear Sanctuary, a non-governmental organisation received funding from the DS Smith Charitable Foundation to plant 250 acacia trees around the sanctuary and the Educational Hope Farm.

The sanctuary in Zărnești is the biggest brown bear sanctuary in the world, home to over 100 brown bears, most of which have been rescued from captivity.

The DS Smith Charitable Foundation was proud to support this bear sanctuary and its surrounding ecosystem.

The initiative is highly beneficial to the bears as acacia trees not only supply food for the bears but also protect the area against strong winds, create a barrier to minimise the extreme temperatures during the winter, and provide shade during the summer.

Impact of the DS Smith Charitable Foundation continued



Tree planting campaigns in Germany

The DS Smith Charitable Foundation supported One for the Planet, an organisation with a shared goal of educating future generations on sustainability.

The educational project, 'A Tree for Every Child', initiated by the German Environmental Foundation, organises tree-planting campaigns with pupils throughout Germany. Through educational material and engaging activities, children are encouraged to get involved in environmental protection.

This donation provided seedlings, tools and information materials for environmental education of 40 school classes throughout Germany.

“DS Smith’s support will enable us to introduce more school classes to the concept of circular economy in 2024. We are very grateful for the donation, which allows us to further expand the educational offer.”

Celin Sommer
Project Manager of the school planting campaign

Children nature education programmes in Romania

The DS Smith Charitable Foundation provided funding to the Carpathia Conservation Foundation for 60 children from socially disadvantaged groups in Romania to participate in nature education programmes at the Nature Exploration and Activity Centre Richita.

During the education programmes, each three days long, the children took part in interactive activities and learnt about different species of plants and animals in the Fagaras Mountains.

They were shown a camera trap used by rangers and biologists to observe wild animals. They learnt about the Carpathia Conservation Foundation’s activities, including reintroducing species like the European bison and the beaver.

The children also listened to the sounds of birds whilst on hikes, identified common tree species and observed a beaver dam and their teeth marks on trees and branches.

This learning experience has been enriching for the children and the Carpathia Conservation Foundation was grateful for our support.

Summer Leys Nature Reserve in Northamptonshire, UK

Summer Leys Nature Reserve is one of the most visited reserves of the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire.

The site is a significant site for biodiversity protection, as one of a chain of gravel pits in the Nene Valley, which are important internationally for waterfowl migrating south for the winter.

This site is known for its birdlife, including rarities such as white storks and glossy ibises. The open water, low islands and sinuous margins flanked by grassland also make this an excellent habitat for birds and invertebrates, including dragonfly larvae, diving beetles and water stick insects.

The Foundation provided support for a new pond dipping platform, replacing the former structure that had become unsafe. The donation also contributed to resurfacing the circular path around the main lake.

The new dipping platform now hosts events organised by staff and volunteers, including the 'Little Bugs Club' for carers with young children and 'Youth Rangers' for teenagers. The drainage for the circular path has been greatly improved, allowing the path to remain usable for visitors, bird watchers and wildlife photographers, even in the wettest conditions.