

BEERBLEFISH 

  
BREWING  CO.

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BEERBLEFISH BREWING CO.

# Impact Report

2020



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# Introduction

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Let's get one thing straight up front – we're tiny. We have a tiny workforce working in a tiny unit on a tiny industrial estate in North London. We don't have the clout to be able to influence big companies on what they do and we don't have the spending power to force change. But we believe that even the smallest step can lead to big things.

That means that one more tiny brewery writing an impact report of all the tiny things they've done over the past year to try to help the world really does matter. It matters because we're going to shout about it and make sure everyone we reach knows that we are trying to make a difference, to be the change (or at least part of it). And if all the other tiny breweries and other tiny businesses also start (or continue) measuring their impact and shouting about it, it will add up to a much bigger impact and all those tiny steps will be amplified so that bigger organisations can no longer ignore the message – businesses need to aim for social and environmental sustainability to help protect people and the planet.

This is our first impact report, but it won't be our last. Since the end of 2020, we've changed our articles of association (that's the legal document that governs how we run our company) to include impact reporting as part of our objectives – that means we have made a commitment to keep on reporting, and we think there's no point in reporting unless there's something to report on, so we'll have to keep making positive changes so that we have something to say!

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**We believe that even the tiniest step can lead to big things.**

# Message from our founders

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When we set up the Beerblefish Brewing Co. in 2015, we both knew that we wanted to run it a bit differently from most of the businesses we were familiar with.

Ethics, governance and good business practices are important to us and we think it is possible for companies to make money at the same time as having a positive impact on society and the environment.

In 2017, we finally took the plunge and stated our aims as a social enterprise, and in the last couple of years we've been getting more frustrated about the things that are difficult to change and more enthusiastic about the opportunities we have to make a difference to the communities we serve.

In our first Impact Report, we're proud to share the things that Beerblefish achieved in 2020, in spite of (or sometimes because of) the global pandemic.



*James*

**James Atherton**  
Managing Director

*Bethany*

**Bethany Burrow**  
Co-Founder

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We believe brewing beer can be a force for good. Our brewery is here to help overcome uneven representation, create new opportunities for veterans and support educational charities.

# Our Aims

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## At Beerblefish, we have four Aims that support us as a social enterprise

Beerblefish Brewing Co. is a social enterprise. While the brewery is set up as a company limited by shares with a view to making a profit, it has aims that help us to make beer a force for good in the community. This is a really important distinction from a charity or not-for-profit organisation – we believe that it is possible to run a business with sound values, help people to achieve their goals and aim to make a profit all at the same time. It just means that pursuit of profit is not the only target we have and there are other things that we think are equally as important as (or more important than) making money.

1. Brew fantastic beer and have fun doing it!

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2. Provide training and mentoring to ex-forces personnel to re-skill and re-enter the workforce after military service

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3. Provide support to youth training schemes and children's organisations

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4. Pay all members of staff at least the living wage

# 1. Brew fantastic beer and have fun doing it!

The first part of this is usually trickier than the second, but we picked up a few awards in 2020 that show that we're not the only people who think our beer (and gin) is fantastic! But the "having fun" part was very tricky in 2020 – when a global pandemic hits and all the pubs shut, it's difficult to still have fun brewing.

However, we made a fairly early decision, one month into the first lockdown, to carry on regardless. We decided we would keep brewing and serving those trade customers who were able to stay open so that between us we could serve our local communities. We also opened our brewery bottle shop three days a week (instead of once a month) and, in September, started our webshop.

These decisions meant that we were able to retain our (then) only employee and even hire another – two fewer people on furlough or jobless. That doesn't sound like much in the grand scheme of the pandemic, but when you're as small as we are, it's an all or nothing game.



Having fun making beer isn't just about the operational side of things, though. It's also about building and sustaining a culture where staff enjoy their work. We think it's important to be transparent with our staff about our opportunities and challenges, wins and losses, and to include them in decision-making so that we, as a whole team, can be sure that our decisions are robust.

Looking forward to 2021, we're planning to implement a more formalised structure for some of the culture-building things we do already, including our staff annual review process, monitoring the implementation rate of employee suggestions and sharing our financial information with the team.

We firmly believe that a happy team leads to happy beer, so the more settled, engaging and fun we can make our workplace, the better our beer will be.

## 2. Provide training and mentoring to ex-forces personnel to re-skill and re-enter the workforce after military service

We hired our first military veteran as an assistant brewer in 2018. It was his first commercial brewing job and he spent nearly two years with us learning the ropes. In February 2020, he left us to join a macro brewing company – we were really sad to see him go, but in terms of our aims it was a massive success that he was able to secure a role with a larger company.

After our assistant brewer left, we considered how best to serve this aim going forward. Our immediate need was for an experienced brewer who could help us grow, so we decided not to specifically seek a military veteran at that point, intending to work out an internship or work experience program instead so that we could reach more veterans during the course of a year. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to put that on hold, and we haven't yet put a new program in place.

Looking forward, we still intend to implement an internship or work experience program and will work on this once COVID restrictions are lifted.

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## 3. Provide support to youth training schemes and children's organisations

In September 2020, we partnered with West Lea School, a school for young people with special educational needs, to provide an internship placement for a young man with several disabilities.

Our Managing Director, James Atherton, has dyslexia and understands how difficult it can be to address some of the challenges people can face in education and in the workplace, so he was keen to pursue this opportunity.

Our intern, also called James, joined the team on a part time, unpaid internship, supported by West Lea School. He was accompanied on most days by his job coach, who was an invaluable resource for us to make sure that we were doing the right thing by James. We had to learn how best to help him thrive in his work, which took time but was rewarding and led us to operational efficiencies that we honestly hadn't expected.



Since the end of 2020, James has finished his placement... and we've hired him as a part-time, permanent member of our team.



## 4. Pay all members of staff at least the living wage

This one's fairly simple – box ticked. But we'll continue to monitor our pay practices and make sure that everyone's getting a fair deal.

In 2021, we've already been looking at simple ways to enhance the benefits available to our team members and we've implemented the UK Government's Cyclescheme and Techscheme, meaning employees can spread the cost of bicycles, cycling equipment and technology and potentially make a tax saving at the same time.

The Beerblefish Brewing Co. Christmas Party 2020 (held on 1 May 2021!)





# Work in Progress

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We're proud to be part of the Work in Progress group, helping to improve inclusion in the brewing industry

Diversity and inclusion in the brewing industry has been a hot topic for many years, but in 2020 things came to a bit of a head in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement. In the summer of 2020, our friends at Mondo Brewing and Brewgooder joined forces to set up a group called Work in Progress.

Work in Progress is an open, de-centralised group of breweries that aspire to a more inclusive and representative beer industry. Members are committed to taking action in their businesses and forging links with communities to increase opportunities and promote collaboration between brewers and under-represented groups in society.

As soon as we heard about Work In Progress, we signed up. The group invites members to make solid commitments towards meeting its aims. As we already have aims that are in line with the Work in Progress ethos, we had a good starting point – for example, we took on our intern shortly after joining the group.



However, we didn't feel that was enough. Given that forty percent of the people involved in running our brewery are disabled and/or neurodiverse, our Work in Progress focus in 2020 was on improving beer accessibility for neurodiverse and disabled people. We have made a few small changes in this regard.

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## Alt Text and Textual Information in Pictures

We committed to including alt text on all the pictures we post online. This helps people using screen reader software (which reads the text out loud) by describing the picture – this is particularly helpful where a picture includes an image of text, which the reader won't "see" as words. If we don't include alt text or a placeholder, then screen readers will often read out the full url of the picture, which doesn't help anyone!

We sometimes use pictures and funky graphics that include important text information. Where we do that, we've committed to also including the important information in the text part of a website or social media post.

We've tried really hard to meet these commitments, and we haven't always got there, but we have improved our hit-rate over the year. The main barrier to success is remembering to do it – and we'll get better at that the more embedded it is in our processes.

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## Workforce Diversity

As an equal opportunities employer, we don't tolerate discrimination based on gender, race, sexuality, nationality, disability or any other protected characteristic, including in our hiring practices. We want our workplace to be diverse and inclusive and we believe that diversity leads to better operational and strategic decisions because more different voices at the table mean more robust decision-making.

As our workforce is so small, our gender diversity statistics can swing wildly if just one person leaves or joins, so it's difficult to get a view of our diversity trends. Looking at employees alone, we went from 100% male at the start of 2020 to 50:50 male:female at the end of 2020. Counting the founders (who are not employees) and our intern, we went from 75:25 male:female to 60:40 male:female during 2020.

In addition, 40% of our total workforce (i.e. including the founders and intern) is disabled and/or neurodiverse.

# Bottle Labelling and Pump Clips

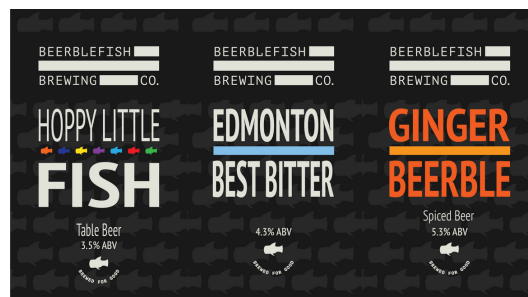
We had a look at our bottle labelling and pump clip designs. We realised that some of our labels, while beautiful (in our humble opinion), weren't that easy to read. Most customers, no matter their abilities, appreciate the basic information of beer name, beer style and alcohol by volume being prominently visible so that they can make a quick assessment and decision when they see it on the shelf or the bar.

Therefore, our newest labels and pump clips use a mixture of techniques, including colour coding, font size and contrast of text against background to help our customers see what it is they are buying. This is particularly helpful for those who find reading difficult, whatever the reason. We still have a way to go on some of our older designs; it's always difficult to let go of a beautiful thing, but we will continue to review our designs as we come to reprint them so that our labelling becomes more inclusive over time.

A couple of our older style pump clip designs:



And a few of our newer ones:



## Website

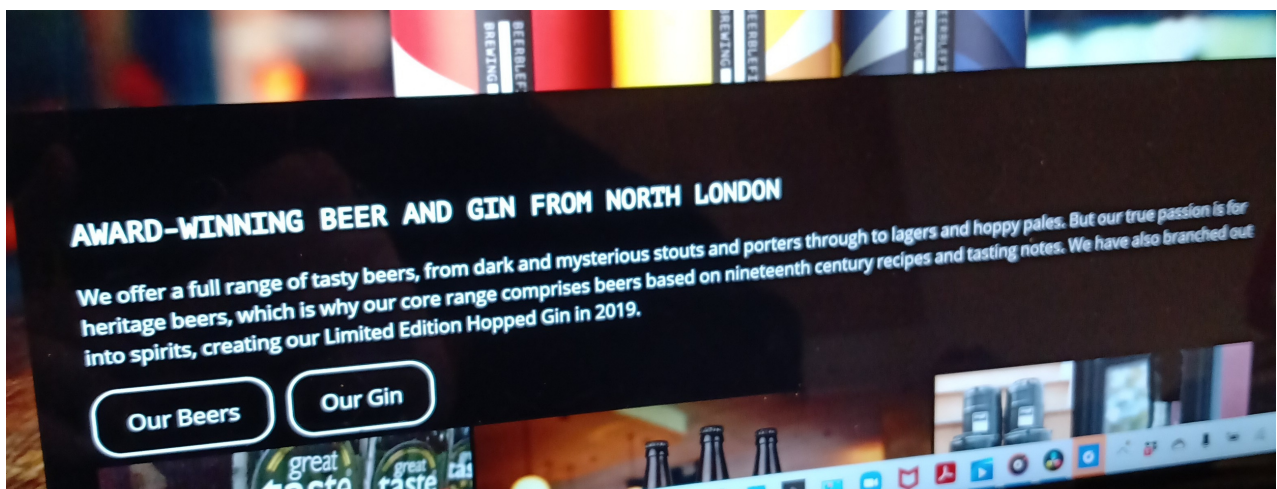
We redesigned our website in 2020. In preparing for this, we did two market research exercises.

One of these was to ask screen reader users, partially sighted people and people with dyslexia (including our own MD) what would be helpful in developing the site. We looked at the things mentioned above – font, contrast, alt text, etc., – and also talked about using text over picture backgrounds and how that can make things more difficult to read.

The other exercise was in relation to creating our online shop. We asked a diverse group of people what they loved and hated about the online shops they had previously visited, with a view to making our shop as user-friendly as possible for as many people as we can. We got a huge variety of feedback, including lots of really small points that make a big difference to user experience, but one of the most common wishes was that we either make the “title” field optional at checkout or exclude it altogether.

Titles are problematic for people for all sorts of reasons, including relating to marital status and gender identity and expression, so this was a really easy thing for us to take on board. We made a conscious decision to exclude the field when we created the shop so that we could make it more inclusive.

Feedback from our customers has been great. We made a few tweaks in response to early feedback, but the overwhelming message has been that our customer experience pathway shows that we thought about it carefully and listened to the suggestions and themes that came out of our market research exercises, helping to make the shop more inclusive than it otherwise would have been.





# Environment

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## Looking after the planet is important to us, and we're starting to make progress

We've found that being a small business in a small unit on a small industrial estate has made it difficult for us to make even small changes that help the environment, even though some things ought to be "low-hanging fruit". We've found it difficult to source commercial recycling collections due to the location of our premises, which is a major roadblock for our environmental credentials. We also can't benefit from economies of scale in areas like water reduction and reuse in the same way that a larger brewery might be able to – but that doesn't mean we don't try.

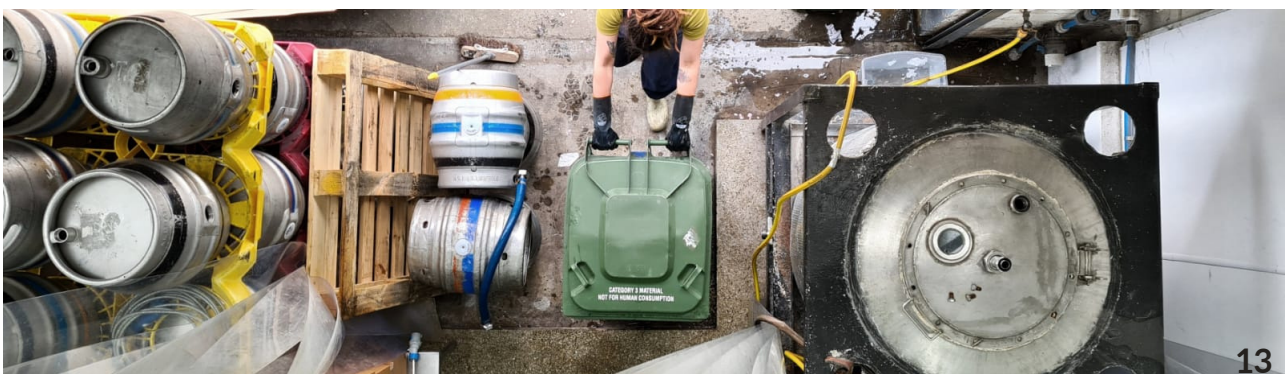
Environmental impact is an area where we know there's a lot more we could and should be doing and we have great plans for the future, but here are some examples of the small things we have been able to do.

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## Food Waste Recycling

We use a company called ReFood to dispose of our food waste, including spent grain and hops. They pick it up each week just like a normal waste collection, but what happens next is magic. ReFood recycles the waste into energy and fertiliser. ReFood is the UK's only fully integrated food chain recycler and processes our waste in its shiny new Anaerobic Digester here in London.

In 2020, we sent almost four tonnes of food waste to ReFood, resulting in the production of 1,076 kWh of renewable energy – that's equivalent to about a twelfth (8.3 %) of our electricity usage for the year. And that's not all! Recycling our food waste also led to a CO2 saving of 1.84 tonnes, split roughly equally between savings from waste not going to landfill and displacement of fossil fuel.





**3,985kg** | amount of spent malt and hops sent for recycling into electricity and fertiliser

**1,076kWh**

amount of energy generated from our spent malt and hops

**1.84 tonnes** of CO2 saved

**0.88 tonnes**  
by displacement of fossil fuel

**0.96 tonnes**  
by diversion from landfill

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## Boxes

We get through a lot of boxes. Things arrive in boxes and beer goes out in boxes. Boxes are expensive and they are costly to the environment if they are treated as single use items. For some of the boxes we use, we have no control over their eventual fate – those we give to our trade or webshop customers, for example. But the boxes we store bottles in and those we receive things in are reused as many times as possible before they are discarded. We also sometimes use pre-loved boxes to pack beer into for our brewery shop and market stall customers and all the new boxes we buy are made from 70% recycled materials and are fully recyclable.

We also use some plastic beer crates that were being thrown out by a brewery neighbour – these are really durable and, while they are plastic, they have been and will be used hundreds and thousands of times before they are disposed of.

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## Future Plans

As noted above, we know we have a lot to do in this area – but we've already made a few more changes in 2021, including implementing battery and printer toner cartridge recycling schemes. We also plan to discuss recycling with our general waste service provider to try to get more of our waste recycled.

We plan to get more reusable plastic beer crates so that we can reduce our reliance on cardboard boxes for storage in the brewery. We have also ordered some jute bottle bags that we will sell to our retail customers, then incentivise them to reuse the bags by offering a discount on the beer they buy to refill them – the discount from reusing the bag two or three times (depending on what beers you buy) will recover the outlay on the bag, and then it's savings all the way!

# Philanthropy

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While our aims are our focus, that doesn't stop us helping out in other ways!

In early 2020, while much of the world was (quite rightly) panicking about coronavirus, the people of Australia were dealing with a different kind of real and present danger – bushfires. Our general manager, Glenn Heinzl, is Australian and we wanted to do something to contribute to the huge charity effort that was underway to help the people affected.

We did what we do best – we brewed a beer! We joined in a global effort to brew an XPA (extra pale ale) called Resilience. We donated the proceeds of this brew, £1,145, to the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, which aims to renew the vitality of remote and rural communities – many of which were hit particularly hard by the bushfires.

We were also privileged to donate some of the Resilience XPA to a Bushfire Benefit Concert put on at the Royal College of Music by Australian musicians living in the UK.



# Anti-Slavery Measures

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We take care to understand where our supplies are coming from to protect workers around the world

In the UK, large companies and other organisations are required to make and publish a statement under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 that sets out the steps they have taken in the last financial year to combat slavery and human trafficking in their business and their supply chain (or, to state they haven't taken any such steps, if that's the case).

As we've mentioned before (a few times!), we're really rather small, so we don't have to make one of these statements. But we think this is a really important topic and we have done and will continue to do a few key things that we think help to combat slavery and human trafficking. These include:

- Paying all our staff at least the living wage. This is a legal requirement, but we want to be clear that we do actually do it!
- Being respectful of our staff's time off. We try not to disturb them on weekends and evenings unless it's an emergency and they know that if we send them an email at the weekend or in the evening, they don't need to respond until at least their next working day.
- Vetting our suppliers. Many of our suppliers are large enough that they are required to make a Modern Slavery Act statement and we make sure we read them so that we know what they are doing in this regard. If we think a supplier or potential supplier isn't doing enough to combat slavery and human trafficking, we're likely to choose someone else if we can.

During 2021, we've already added to this list: we've committed to only buying fairtrade tea and coffee supplies for the brewery and we source our toilet paper from Who Gives a Crap, a B Corporation that supports water and sanitation charities in developing countries. And there's more to come as we take a look at where more of our supplies are coming from and who is producing them.

# Next Steps

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## Where do we go from here?

Impact reports are not just about looking back, but also looking forward. This Impact Report is a continuous work in progress – a way for us to track our impact and improvements over time. Here are just some of the things we're planning to do to continue the work we've started.

### Improve our Recycling Rates

1. We're planning to revisit our waste contracts so we can get more recycling done. We want to have glass and mixed dry recycling collections and to monitor how much of our waste we are recycling

### Embed our Culture of Workforce Development

2. We're committed to helping our employees to develop their careers. In 2021, we've already formalised our performance development process and we're making sure employees have access to training that will help them to grow in their roles.

### Move to 100% Renewable Electricity

3. We're planning to move to a new tariff that provides us with 100% renewable electricity for the brewery (compared with 61% currently). Coupled with our food waste recycling (into electricity), this should make our energy impact carbon negative.

### Develop an Internship Program for Military Veterans

4. We want to be able to help as many military veterans as we can to find jobs as they re-enter the civilian world. We believe an internship or work experience program is the best way for us to do this.

# Conclusion

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Writing down everything we did in 2020 to improve our social and environmental impact has been a joyful experience. We're proud that, even in the face of a global pandemic, we've managed to do so much. But we know there's plenty more to do and we're excited about what the future holds. One thing's for sure – social and environmental considerations are firmly at the heart of our decision-making and that means our impact will continue to get better over time.

2020 was a challenging year for everyone, which makes it even more exciting to pick out our highlights in this report- because despite everything, we still had some!

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Next year, and in years to come, we're looking forward to moving forward with our aims and continuing to make beer (and gin) a force for good.

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# Acknowledgements

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Many thanks to everyone who helped us to make a social and environmental impact in 2020!

The people who helped us to make an impact and then report on it include:

**ReFood UK Limited** food waste recycling <https://refood.co.uk/>

**West Lea School (and job coach Kris)** supported internship program  
<https://westleaschool.co.uk/>

**Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal** <https://frrr.org.au/>

**Bethany Burrow** report research, copywriting and design

**James Parkes, Glenn Heinzl and Richard Reeve** photography

**Michaela, Glenn and James, the Beerblefish staff (and former employee, Andy)**  
doing their thing

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Thank you for your continued support in our efforts to make a positive social and environmental impact.