

**ROUSE**

# ENVIRONMENT SOCIAL GOVERNANCE

ANNUAL REPORT May 2022 - Apr 2023



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| A message from our Chief Operating Officer | 2  |
| Executive Summary                          | 3  |
| Social                                     | 5  |
| Environment                                | 8  |
| Introduction                               |    |
| Carbon Footprint                           |    |
| Targets and Outlook                        |    |
| Governance                                 | 12 |
| Rouse in the community                     | 14 |
| Community engagement                       |    |
| Charitable support                         |    |
| Five-year action plan                      | 17 |



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER



*I am proud of the dedication and passion demonstrated by our team members in driving positive change within our organisation and communities.*

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Thank you for your interest in Rouse's inaugural Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) report.

Rouse has been committed to sustainable, responsible and ethical business practices for many years. We are dedicated to minimising our environmental footprint, fostering diversity and inclusion, and upholding the highest standards of corporate governance.

In 2022 we partnered with the ESG consultancy firm Sustainable Advantage to assess 47 specific ESG areas. We evaluated Rouse's impact on employees, communities, customers and the environment – all areas that are relevant to our business and industry. The assessment resulted in a numeric score that has enabled Rouse to

develop a roadmap for continuous ESG improvement.

This report reflects our progress and achievements over the past year, as well as our ambitious goals for the future. We aim to integrate sustainability into every aspect of our operations and engage with our stakeholders transparently and proactively.

I am proud of the dedication and passion demonstrated by our team members in driving positive change within our organisation and communities. Together we will continue to innovate, collaborate and lead by example in the pursuit of a more sustainable and equitable world.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership on this important journey.



**Rupert  
Ross-Macdonald**  
Chief Operating Officer





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rouse's inaugural ESG report outlines our comprehensive approach to diversity, environmental responsibility, employee engagement and governance. We are represented by over 20 ethnic groups and have a 72% female workforce, while our carbon-footprint management is on a clear path towards Net Zero emissions by 2050. With an enhanced corporate governance model, Rouse upholds the highest standards of ethical practice and risk management .







**SOCIAL**





Rouse's Board of Directors and senior management are actively working to ensure that the company offers an inclusive workplace where our people can thrive. The review carried out in 2022 by the ESG consultancy Sustainable Advantage recognised Rouse's commitment to diversity, as embodied in our Diversity Policy and reflected in the organisation-wide metrics.

By way of example, over 20 ethnic groups are represented across our organisation, and we have a majority female headcount (72%). This also carries through to our management teams, (72% female), and our C-suite, where four of the 10 representatives are women. Of the 46 promotions Rouse made last year, 72% were female.

In addition, this review identified the work Rouse has done to enhance employees mental and physical wellbeing. Rouse currently offers flexible working policies across all offices to support this. In addition to offering, mental health support at a local level via Employee Assistance Programmes, psychology counselling and counselling courses.

Rouse's approach to grievance resolution is robust, with clearly outlined policies and procedures in handbooks that are accessible to everyone in the organisation. Rouse's HR function monitors and reports to the board on grievance statistics from across all jurisdictions of the organisation.

**72%**

Of total employees are women

**72%**

Of management teams are women

**72%**

Of promotions last year belong to women

**4/10**

C-suite representatives are women

**20**

Ethnic groups





Anti-bribery and anti-corruption training sessions – also covering whistleblowing – have been rolled out and completed by all Rouse employees. Refresher courses and new-starter training sessions have been built into annual training programmes and induction days.

Rouse's Health and Safety policies and procedures have been comprehensively reviewed to ensure a secure work environment for all employees. The last review cited a need for additional policies relating to wellness and recruitment. Policies in both these areas have now been developed and implemented across all regions.

*In our 2022  
employee survey  
our people said...*

**85%**

Of employees said that Rouse was a good place to work

**90%**

Of employees felt part of a team

**90%**

Of employees said they collaborate well with their peers





# ENVIRONMENT



## Introduction

Rouse recognises that our operations impact the environment in various ways, in common with other international professional service providers. From energy consumption in our offices to corporate travel, our business activities contribute both directly and indirectly to carbon emissions.

We recognise our responsibility to reduce our environmental impact and ultimately to achieve Net Zero emissions. Although this is challenging, Rouse is committed to the following actions as stated in our ESG policy:



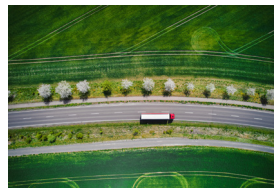
**Reducing our carbon footprint.** We will set clear emissions reduction targets, support the use of energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy sources, and promote sustainable transportation options for our employees



**Reducing waste.** We will implement waste-reduction strategies – including recycling and waste diversion programmes – to minimise the environmental impact of our operations



**Conserving resources.** We will actively manage our consumption of natural resources and energy to reduce our impact on the environment



**A sustainable supply chain.** We will encourage suppliers to adhere to sustainable and environmentally responsible practices, including following ethical labour standards

Our approach is to focus primarily on our own reduction efforts. However, a large proportion of the carbon emissions relating to our business flow from indirect causes, where we may have some influence but no control. This makes them more challenging to reduce in the short term.





## Carbon Footprint

Our carbon-footprint calculations are based on the 2022-2023 financial year, which serves as the base year for our Net Zero endeavour.

The calculations provide insight into the emissions footprint of Rouse’s global operations in three different scopes: Direct (Scope 1), Indirect (Scope 2), and Indirect Upstream and Downstream (Scope 3). These definitions are aligned with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, as

set out by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD).

Emissions are calculated in tCO<sub>2</sub>e, or tonnes (t) of carbon-dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) equivalent (e). This is a standard unit for measuring greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, regardless of whether the emissions are carbon dioxide or another gas (e.g. N<sub>2</sub>O, CH<sub>4</sub>, PFCs, SF<sub>6</sub>, HFCs).

### Scope 1

|                                       |      |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| Stationary combustion (gas)           | 0.6% |
| Transport (owned and leased vehicles) | 0.4% |
| Refrigerants                          | 1.9% |

### Scope 2

|                                       |      |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| Purchased electricity, (market based) | 9.6% |
|---------------------------------------|------|

### Scope 3

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Purchased goods and services            | 37.5% |
| Capital goods                           | 3.1%  |
| Fuel & energy related activities        | 3.5%  |
| Waste                                   | 12.9% |
| Business travel                         | 9.8%  |
| Employees commuting (to & from home)    | 14.2% |
| Employees commuting (working from home) | 6.4%  |

|                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Total Net Emissions</b>        | <b>2,354.14 tCO<sub>2</sub>e</b> |
| <b>Net Emissions per Employee</b> | <b>3.18 tCO<sub>2</sub>e</b>     |



As 2022-2023 is the base year, we do not have earlier figures to compare against. In addition, some of the data collected during this base-year period may not be an accurate reflection of our carbon-reduction efforts. This is due to the fact that some of the information from our supply-chain partners is based on estimates, or has been calculated simply as a proportion of their overall figures.

For example, we discovered that at some of our sites there is limited correlation between waste figures and the number of Rouse employees. Given that all our

sites are in office buildings, we believe the discrepancies may arise from Rouse being provided with waste figures for the entire buildings, rather than only for our proportion of that waste. Part of our future work lines in understanding and addressing issues such as these. Regardless, we understand that there is always room to improve, and by benchmarking ourselves against our competitors, we will see additional opportunities from industry practice to reduce our carbon-footprint .

## Targets and Outlook

Rouse is dedicated to reducing our GHG emissions year-on-year and we aim to achieve Net Zero emission across our business by 2050, demonstrating our leadership and commitment to sustainable business practices within the IP industry.

To drive these ambitions to the next level, we have engaged the services of ESG consultancy Sustainable Advantage to advise the Rouse board on global best practices for carbon reduction. We now

have a detailed plan for reducing carbon emissions and we are working on areas for improvement.

For example, some of our offices are already on 100% green-electricity contracts. We have also conducted surveys on the commuting behaviours of our staff. Understanding this better will allow us to target our efforts in educating employees and making recommendations on emissions reductions.



# GOVERNANCE





The year to 30 April 2023 saw further material improvements to our governance structures. Following the completion of the investment in our business by MML Capital Partners in July 2022 – after a rigorous due diligence process – we welcomed a new Board led by Non-Executive Chairman Paul Raleigh and including two Non-Executive Directors from MML.

The Board established an Audit & Risk Committee as well as a Remuneration Committee, setting out clear Terms of Reference. Later in 2022, the Board approved our Equality & Diversity Policy, confirming our prioritisation of this key area.

Following the review by Sustainable Advantage, we created a plan to improve the coordination of our ESG efforts. An ESG Committee was formed with participation from members of the Board and other senior management to oversee our work across all ESG issues. Towards the end of 2022 we also conducted a review of our compliance policies with another specialist consultancy, Good Corporation. Whilst noting our quality in this area, the review resulted in an action plan to further improve our compliance practices.

Our regular Board and Audit & Risk Committee meetings include reviews of our ESG and Compliance practices. In April 2023, the Board approved a suite of updated and improved governance codes and policies, including a Code of Conduct, a Modern Slavery Policy, a Whistleblowing Policy, an Anti-Bribery & Anti-Corruption Policy, a Gifts & Hospitality Policy, a Relations with Public Officials Policy, and



a Third Party Due Diligence Policy.

We continue to extend the coverage of our important and externally audited ISO 27001 and 27701 certifications. These are multi-year programmes to ensure the highest levels of Information Security and Personal Information Management Systems at Rouse.





# ROUSE IN THE COMMUNITY





## Community engagement

Rouse is not only dedicated to delivering exceptional legal intellectual property services to our clients, but also to making a positive impact on the communities we serve. As a responsible corporate citizen, we recognise the importance of giving back and contributing to the improvement of society. Our Community Engagement Plan demonstrates our commitment to engage proactively with our communities, support charitable causes, and encourage our employees to be agents of positive change.

Community engagement is more than a corporate obligation; it's a reflection of our core values. By actively participating in community initiatives we aim to foster goodwill, build trust, and strengthen our reputation as a socially responsible organisation. We believe that our expertise in IP law can be a force for good, and we are committed to using our skills to address legal challenges faced by underserved individuals and organisations.

Rouse seeks to make a difference in the countries and the wider regions in which we operate. Our community-engagement activities – started in 2008 – are today run under the umbrella of Rouse Cares. These activities range from providing pro bono legal services to supporting charitable institutions and working directly with community organisations. Rouse Cares brings a strong local focus to our global efforts, providing valuable opportunities for employees to develop personally and professionally by getting involved in our community and charity-based initiatives.

We have chosen four objectives:

1. **Enhance our community impact by:**
  - a. increasing the amount of work we undertake on a pro bono basis
  - b. creating a Community Impact Fund that provides support to community projects and initiatives aligned with our expertise
2. **Strengthen Rouse's reputation as a socially responsible IP services business by:**
  - a. taking part in surveys and gaining industry recognition
  - b. developing a comprehensive communication strategy to share our community engagement strategy with clients, partners and stakeholders
3. **Foster employee engagement by:**
  - a. building on the activities already carried as part of the Rouse Cares initiative to encourage offices to contribute their time to volunteer activities
  - b. recognising and celebrating contributions through regular business-wide communications
4. **Measure and report impact by:**
  - a. establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the social, economic and environmental impact of our community-engagement efforts.
  - b. publishing an annual report on our community engagement activities with achievements, lessons learned and future goals.

Social

Environment

Governance

Rouse in the community

Five-year action plan

By focusing on these areas, we aim to create a lasting and positive legacy in the communities we serve, while reinforcing our commitment to social responsibility and ethical legal practice.

## Charitable support

We support a number of charities, both within and outside of the countries where we operate.

We have been supporting the **Mitrataa Foundation** in Nepal since 2018, although our relationship with the founder and Rouse alum Bec Ordish goes back much further.

The Foundation's mission is to inspire the Nepali people to empower themselves by providing education, skills and training that they can take forward to inspire their own networks. In previous years we have supported two of their programmes around financial literacy and micro-entrepreneurship. In 2023, Bec moved our support to two other projects:

- **Roshani's Award**, which supports special young women who have faced discrimination due to their disabilities. The current recipient is now working as an assistant teacher
- **The other is the hostel at the heart of Mitrataa**. This is a calm and safe space where the families supported by Mitrataa can come together. It's also where tuition and monthly meetings take place



*...the impact is a lot deeper – because they pay forward the support to their families and wider circles. For example, the women who went through the financial literacy programs now pass on those skills within their families and are more stable, which of course filters through to their children and wider support networks.”*

**Bec Ordish, Mitrataa Foundation**

You can read December 2022 update from founder Bec Ordish on the projects we are supporting [here](#).

To learn more about the Mitrataa Foundation or to donate, please visit: [Mitrataa Foundation](#).



# FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

Our objectives for 2024 have been set by taking into consideration the already high level of activity across the group (as independently assessed by external consultants). Despite the progress we have made, there is a strong appetite to achieve even more. Our guiding goals are as follows:



Continue to be an employer where employees can build their careers in a supportive, diverse and inclusive environment. We aim to recognise and reward the contribution of every employee.



Continue our financial support of the Mitrataa Foundation and ensure that any charitable support takes a long-term view that maximises the value of the relationship and remains consistent for the charities.



When it comes to carbon footprint reduction, there are some things we can control and others that we cannot. We will focus our efforts primarily on those that we can.



We introduced a raft of new policies in 2023, including the board-approved Code of Conduct. We will commit to ensure that the policies remain compliant and reflect the growth ambitions of the business.



We will integrate our compliance responsibilities throughout the business, with regular training and refresher sessions for both new and existing employees.



We commit to communicate our ESG activities towards Rouse stakeholders and to act on their feedback where appropriate.



**ROUSE**

[www.rouse.com](http://www.rouse.com)