



**BALFOUR**

HUSH HEATH ESTATE

KENT-ENGLAND

# **BALFOUR WINERY**

## SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2022



**SUSTAINABILITY REPORT**

- 1) Sustainable Wines of Great Britain (SWGB).
- 2) What is the SWGB and why it is important.
- 3) The estate, in the vineyards and surrounding ecosystems.
- 4) Inside the winery.
- 5) In the office and cellar door.
- 6) Our plans and goals for sustainability in the future.

**If you have any questions or queries regarding this report please contact us at [info@balfourwinery.com](mailto:info@balfourwinery.com).**



## **1) Sustainable Wines of Great Britain (SWGB).**

We are incredibly proud to be one of the founding members of the Sustainable Wines of Great Britain (SWGB) certification scheme. Our experienced viticultural team have worked hard to ensure that our sites meet the exacting standards required to be certified under the SWGB scheme. We are accredited in the Vineyard, and we are currently working on the winery sustainability audit.

## **2) What is the SWGB and why it is important.**

“Sustainable Wines of Great Britain’s (SWGB) mission is “to secure environmental sustainability at the heart of UK wine production”. It is a service to WineGB members which seeks to inform them on sustainable issues and encourage them to become more environmentally sustainable production of wine in the UK.”

The scheme has specific guidelines which are designed to meet objectives in both vineyard and winery, pertaining to issues such as soil health (vineyard), the reduction and optimisation of pesticide inputs (vineyard), energy and water conservation (winery), and carbon footprint reduction (winery).



### **3) The estate, in the vineyards and surrounding ecosystems.**

Hush Heath Estate is a patchwork of different natural habitats and areas of human land use. There has been a concerted effort to farm with natural ecosystems in mind, from considered land management techniques, regenerating land (e.g., planting wildflower meadows), to specialised waste recycling and reuse (e.g., grape waste.).

Below are examples of ecosystems found on the estate and the service these ecosystems provide:

- **We planted approximately 10/15 acres of wildflower meadows.**

The presence of wildflowers with nectar-rich plants helps support dwindling populations of native pollinators including butterflies, moths, and bees, helping to sustain insects that pollinate our food crops. This is particularly important in increasingly built-up environments.

- **We have wider grass margins.**

Field margin strips can be important in linking habitats whilst also providing a habitat in their own right. Field margin strips can also help to protect boundary features from operations in the field, acting as a buffer zone from pesticides and fertilisers.



- **Our woodlands.**

Woodlands and their management are a significant area of activity and importance. Woodlands, when well-managed, are a significant carbon sink and are important ecosystems for a multitude of fungal, plant, and animal life. We have diverse woodland (ranging from old growth Oak to recently reforested multi-species plots with species such as Hawthorn, Birch, and Hazel). Each woodland type can be home to many distinct species, and many of the same species, depending on the tree species that live there, the age of the trees, and the structure of the woodland).

- **Other ecosystems on the estate.**

We have several ponds to support biodiversity (from aquatic species such as frogs and avian species such as Moorhens) which gather in and around the water.

- **Land management techniques used on the estate.**

Below are examples of the land management techniques used on the estate, their purpose, and how they benefit the environment/reduce negative impacts on the environment:

- **Processing of vineyard and estate waste.**

Grape waste is composted over several years and reused as mulch.



- **The use of target-specific spray regimen.**

We use target specific pesticides, which have high target specificity and are designed to act on a small range or even just one specific type of pest.

- **Vineyard Floor Management.**

This is demonstrated through our use of Green Manure, which sits under the umbrella term 'Cover Crops'. Overall, a cover crop is any living ground cover, predominantly planted to protect the soil from erosion. Cover crops provide many other services, have multiple uses, and there are numerous opportunities for inclusion in both annual and perennial crop systems such as vineyards. In vineyards, cover crops can be planted in multiple areas, living alongside the vines. They can be planted inter-row (between the vines), under vine, and on headlands.

- **Our Hives and Bees.**

We have our own honey bees, and as pollinators, bees play a part in every aspect of the ecosystem. They support the growth of trees, flowers, and other plants, which serve as food and shelter for creatures large and small. Bees contribute to complex, interconnected ecosystems that allow a diverse number of varied species to co-exist.



- **The placement of bird boxes around the estate.**

We have put up bird boxes for the local bird life. Bird Houses are often called nesting boxes because they provide a safe place for birds to build their nests, protected from the elements and predators. In the winter months, they give visiting birds a place to snuggle together for warmth away from the cold air.

A diverse and robust community of bird species, from small bird such as Blue Tits to large predatory birds such as Buzzards is fundamental to the functioning of the ecosystems in which they live, eating fruit, spreading seeds, and controlling insect and rodent populations.

The spillover effect for vineyards is the same community of birds can help reduce pest pressure within the vineyard, by preying on pests that feed on the grapevine and its fruit. However, there is a balance to be found, as the same birds can also threaten grapes close to harvest.

- **Native plants and hedgerows around the estate.**

We use native plants and hedging rather than fences and wire where possible. Native plants are food and habitat for native animals, as part of a biodiverse ecosystem. Promoting native plants, both in quantity and diversity, is a foundational pillar of ecosystem restoration and conservation. Re. hedgerows, their role is well documented, and act in a similar way to field margin strips. They can be important in linking different habitats whilst also providing a habitat for specific plant and animal species. They also can act a buffer zone and help to break up what can easily become an homogenous landscape (as viticulture is a monoculture).



#### **4) Inside the winery.**

Across production, we aim to use recyclable materials and materials made from recycled waste to directly and indirectly reduce waste.

As production materials must be sourced from 3rd parties, it's critical to work with suppliers who share our view of reducing the environmental impact of the goods we produce. We therefore work with suppliers and manufacturers who have ambitious and thorough sustainability protocols and policy in the production chain, meet environmental processing standards (such as FSC and OK compost), and have internationally recognized certification such as ISO 14001:2015.

The significance of working with responsible suppliers means our drive toward sustainability is not limited to the site alone but looks to ensure sustainability across our supply chain.

- **Production materials.**

Glass Bottles - Glass is widely recycled, and the majority of our wine is bottled in green glass which has a high recycled content. We bottle in two different colours; green and clear. Our green glass contains 89.8% recycled glass and our clear glass contains 50% recycled glass. We bottle in Flint (clear), Green, and Amber bottles across the portfolio.

Reports from industry body BritGlass indicate that a green wine bottle in the UK will contain, on average, 68% recycled material. From a recyclability perspective, glass is widely recycled, and can generally be processed to make new glass products over and over (closed loop recycling). The glass we source is made in compliance with several industry recognized ISO manufacturing standards. The glass is very high quality, which improves the future recyclability.

The significance of this is that if glass is of too poor quality to be remelted, it is down-cycled (open-loop recycling), for a range of secondary applications. The preference however is a closed-loop recycling system where high-quality glass is remelted and recycled endlessly, and the highest material value is maintained. By sourcing high quality glass, we can be sure that the glass we use not only consists of recycled material but can also be readily recycled for future use.

- **The labels used on our bottles.**

The use of FSc Certified paper – the FSc system provides an assurance that wood and paper products have been produced (harvest and processing) in an environmental and socially responsible way.

- **Our packaging materials.**

We ensure that the cardboard used for the outer boxes are a mixture of biodegradable and recyclable materials. Box and case material comes from FSC Controlled Wood; FSC Mix, FSC Recycled sources dependent on product. Wine case inserts are produced from 100% recycled paper from post-consumer and industrial sources and are industrially compostable.

The corrugated cardboard 6-bottle cases we use are 75-78% recycled content, with recycled and virgin material from FSC certified sources.

The box tape we use is recyclable, and the manufacturer Directa recycles 98% of its waste in production.

- **Closures.**

Corks are Carbon Negative as cork trees produce a net capture of Carbon Dioxide. Cork is also a renewable and recyclable material. Our corks are made from 89.8% recycled content.



- **Reduce/reuse/recycle.**

We reuse as much as possible. We can reuse cardboard layer pads when stacking pallets (if uncontaminated) in production for example, and on the winemaking side we can reuse sanitation chemicals. The policy is to minimise how much we use (of any given product) initially, and reuse where and if possible or appropriate. We endeavour to recycle as much as possible and have sourced materials that are recyclable and/or contain recycled materials to that end to 'close the loop'.

- **Regular monitoring and audits.**

Alongside regular checks and monitoring, we have dedicated compliance processes, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and other structures in place from internationally recognised bodies and conducted to internationally recognised standards. There is an interplay between compliance and sustainability, where good compliance, auditing, and high standards of procedure facilitate responsible and sustainable practice. We have regular maintenance of equipment, with detailed logs. We aim to service, maintain, refurbish, and if needed repair good equipment over the sourcing of new.

- **Energy usage.**

We also have passive lighting capability with large skylights, so for large parts of the day we do not use lighting at all. Same with passive heating and cooling. The winery is passively heated and cooled, minimising energy usage and heat loss/waste.



## 5) In the office and in cellar door.

- **Recyclable drink ware.**

We use recyclable cups and menus for customers in our cellar door.

- **Gift packaging.**

Our gift packaging and printed materials are designed with sustainability in mind. As a result we have recyclable gift boxes and gift bags.

- **Grey water recycling.**

We installed grey water systems in the toilets. Greywater recycling systems collect the water you've used in your sinks, dishwashers, and then plumbs it straight back into the toilet.



## **6) Our plans and goals for sustainability for the future.**

There are several areas to address to successfully complete SWGB audit for the winery.

Below are the objectives for vine growing and winemaking from the SWGB Scheme Rule Book which we are actively working towards.

### **Vinegrowing**

- Maintain and improve soil health
- Manage vineyard canopies and yields optimally
- Minimise and optimise pesticide inputs
- Conserve the vineyard (and surrounding) environment and promote biodiversity
- Reduce vineyard carbon footprint per hectare
- Reduce, re-use, and recycle vineyard waste

### **Winemaking**

- Improve winery design to reduce environmental impact
- Reduce the energy and water footprint per bottle of wine
- Reduce environmental impact of wine packaging
- Reduce the carbon footprint per bottle of wine
- Reduce, re-use, and recycle winery waste and wastewater

