

# Greens the Signmakers

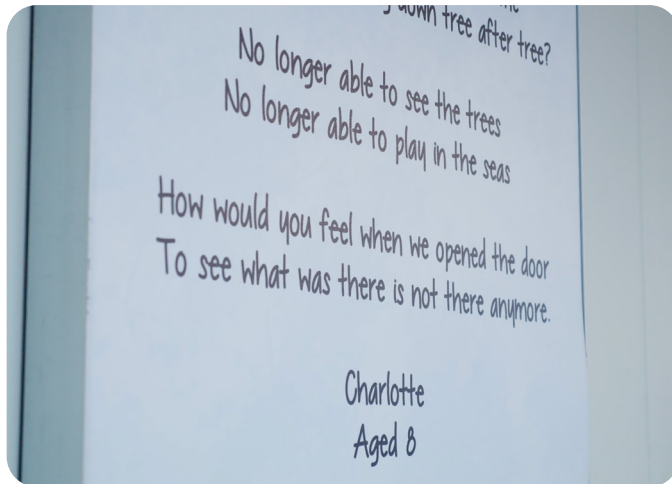
## Green by name, green by nature

**Hull businessman Lawrence Green has been at the helm of his family sign making business since 2018, but it was a heartfelt poem written in 2021 by his eight-year-old daughter Charlotte, that prompted him to embrace sustainability and make Greens the Signmakers as green as possible.**

Lawrence is the third generation to run the business, which was established by his grandfather over six decades ago, and specialises in all aspects of internal and external signage. Thanks to the spark of Charlotte's poem, Greens is now leading the sector in sustainability and has won major industry and regional business awards.

"Charlotte's poem was written from the heart, asking what would be left for children like her if plastics continued to be thrown away and pollute the environment," says Lawrence.

"The next day I was at my office, looking out of the window at dozens of vans leaving with plastic products that I knew would eventually end up in landfill, and I thought yes, we've got to do something. There's no pressure on my children to join the business, but if they do want to, I'd at least like to ensure it's one they'll be proud to take over."



## Investing in the future

The most significant change Lawrence put in place was to make a major investment in a new printer that uses water-based ink.

"This was a big step for us," explains Lawrence. "It meant that we were able to produce signage that was easily recycled. And it was the catalyst for an assessment of how and where we could make further changes."

These included installing 208 solar panels on the roof of the 26,000 sq ft factory, which have produced 70,000kWh of energy in the last year. 70% of the power they produce is used in the business and the remaining 30% is sold back to the National Grid. So far, the solar panels have saved 23,172 kg of CO2 emissions – equivalent to planting over 1,400 trees.

The installation of the panels was conveniently, if innocently, timed to precede the huge rise in energy prices the following year, making the payback period for the business much shorter than it would have been.

Swapping to electric vehicles for project managers has also had a big impact, with 45,000 of the 100,000 miles driven directly powered by electricity produced by the solar panels. Last year Greens used 12,000 fewer litres of diesel than the previous year.

Along with other measures to cut waste by 40%, Greens has managed to cut scope 1 and 2 emissions by almost 35,000 tonnes.

"As well as the savings from EVs and reducing energy use, we've consolidated our deliveries from suppliers, with monthly deliveries from some suppliers instead of every other day. So we're beginning to make a dent in scope 3 emissions too," says Lawrence.

"Because we manufacture everything in-house we can offer our clients a lot of flexibility. Reduced deliveries mean we have more stock here, so if they misplace an order or need more than usual, we can handle it, which they appreciate."



**Lawrence Green**  
Business owner



Oh Yes! Net Zero Member #158

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### Bringing clients along on the journey

Customers are on board with the company's #ChallengeGreen sustainability agenda.

"We're raising awareness by providing quotes for more easily recycled products alongside traditional signage," says Lawrence. "Customers – including global and national brands – welcome this. They have net zero goals too, and suppliers can play a huge role in reducing a company's overall environmental impact."

Offering recyclable signage makes Greens very much a leader in the industry – evidenced by the company winning the 'Sustainability in Signage' category in the 2023 Sign Awards and the 'Environmental and Sustainability' category of the 2022 Hull Live Business Awards. Charlotte was unable to attend as it was a school night but, as the inspiration behind the initiative, she was very proud to be handed the award the next day.

Employee involvement is key to the success of Greens' sustainability activities. Two team members have completed a Training Qualifications UK (TQUK) Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Environmental Sustainability, and a #ChallengeGreen team, made up of employees with a passion for environmental issues, are tasked with finding more ways to save energy and cut waste in the business.

Involvement in industry groups – Lawrence is the only sign maker invited to join an industry action group for more sustainable use of self-adhesive vinyl – and membership of Oh Yes! Net Zero means that Greens can work alongside other businesses to both learn and teach.

"I'm keen to promote what is available, what options there are, and demonstrate that doing the right thing can actually save you money. So, it makes good business sense even if you're not bothered about the environment. If we're all doing it, then we're getting somewhere. Sharing that knowledge and learning from others at Oh Yes! Net Zero meetings is simply a good thing to do and helps build connections locally.

"We hope that by promoting what we're doing to improve our own carbon footprint can help the wider industry move forward and reduce its environmental impact."

### 3 steps to carbon reduction

**Advice from Lawrence Green to other businesses keen to make a start on reducing carbon emissions.**

- Measure your impact: we calculated our scope 1 and 2 emissions for the first time in 2022. If we'd measured at the start of our journey, we'd have a better idea of how far we've come.
- Take time to learn: there are lots of opportunities to learn from other organisations.
- Build sustainability into the business: once you start looking, you'll see opportunities to cut your carbon footprint everywhere, and sustainability will be part of your decision-making process.



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