

Bio-D

Making sustainability a team challenge

Bio-D is a business with sustainability at its core. Established in 1989 and independently owned, the company supplies affordable cleaning products, manufactured locally from plant-based, ethically sourced ingredients.

Bio-D became a B Corp in January 2022, joining a movement of companies that have voluntarily met the highest standards for social and environmental performance.

“Ever since the business began, there’s been a focus on the eco market,” says Heather Nixon, Bio-D’s Sustainability, New Product Development and Regulatory Manager. “But it’s about more than just our products and the environment. B Corp certification focuses on people and the planet, and ensuring our people are fully behind our values and understand why we do what we do is vital for us.

“We’re investing in areas which might not have a direct and immediate financial reward, so bringing our employees with us on that sustainability journey is key to building a stronger team.”



Making progress public

Bio-D began producing a sustainability report when the business was part of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, a charity committed to creating a circular economy that eliminates waste and pollution.

Sustainability reports are a legal requirement for larger listed companies and widely used by fund managers when deciding where to put their clients’ investments. But Bio-D’s sustainability report has a different, more purposeful remit.

“It’s for our customers, our employees, our retailers and wholesalers who may consider stocking our products. It’s really important for them to see the work that we do behind the scenes, and that we do what we say we do. It’s a crucial document for us and it really energises our staff. I have people coming up to me all the time with ideas for things we can include in the next report.”

Bio-D has two sustainability meetings a year to review progress, and the sustainability team includes people from all areas of the business. “We invite suggestions from all over the company at our all-staff meetings,” says Heather. “It gets people thinking about what can be done to improve sustainability in their particular area. When people start seeing changes that came about as a result of their suggestions, it becomes self-motivating.”

Staff suggestions include recycling pallet layer pads instead of throwing them away and using rechargeable batteries in the office. “It’s important to have big goals and small goals,” says Heather. “Small goals may seem insignificant on their own, but they add up. Big goals take longer and staff only really notice them when they’re done - like the LED lighting and EV chargers we installed last year.”



Certified in 2022

B Corp Certification is a designation that a business is meeting high standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency on factors from employee benefits and charitable giving to supply chain practices and input materials.



Heather Nixon
Sustainability, New Product Development and Regulatory Manager



Oh Yes! Net Zero Member #7

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"When we started reporting back the savings in CO2 emissions, they really engaged, especially when they can see the environmental and cost-saving implications. The LED lighting in the warehouse saved us something like one third in the first month. We thought it was going to take many years to pay back the investment, but it won't. After about 18 months, that's pure profit on the bottom line."

The company often hosts PhD students who work with Bio-D to explore the sustainability of their products and packaging, providing not only research material for the students but insights for the company as well.

The current cohort of University of York students are investigating replacing the company's existing washing powder packaging film with what Bio-D hope will be a better alternative. "There's no point changing our packaging unless we can prove there's a benefit to the environment," explains Heather.

"Lots of our competitors move from plastic packaging to what are ostensibly more 'eco-friendly' pouches, but they're not recyclable, so you're adding to landfill. We asked the university to do a life cycle analysis and give us that independent academic scrutiny – and it turns out the right thing to do is to stick with our current packaging."

Public reporting is crucial, Heather believes. "If you don't report back, then people aren't bothered. They don't see it as a priority. But when you start getting public feedback, it holds you to account, which is a really healthy thing for a business that wants to improve."

Membership of Oh Yes! Net Zero is very important to Bio-D.

"We're Hull based and love the city. Being involved in Oh Yes! Net Zero helps us connect with other local businesses and hopefully inspire them. Since we've become B Corp certified, other local companies have approached us to ask us to talk to them about the process and benefits. It's about supporting local companies to change, and Oh Yes! Next Zero is a great platform for that."

"Our sustainability report is driving change. Setting our goals every year and reporting back on how those goals are being met is incredibly powerful for us. It gets people thinking about what can be done to improve sustainability in their particular area. When people start seeing changes that came about because of their suggestions, it becomes self-motivating."

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