



Scottish Leather Group demonstrates the credibility of its Sustainability Report through a BSI Customized Audit



With a combined history of over 500 years, 600 employees, and £100m turnover, Scottish Leather Group (SLG) is the UK's largest producer of leather. Based at Bridge of Weir, near Glasgow, it specializes in the sustainable manufacture of the world's lowest-carbon leather, which is marketed to the automotive, aviation, and luxury goods markets under the Bridge of Weir, Lang, and Muirhead brands.

SLG is committed to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and, specifically, to business sustainability through an innovative low-

carbon leather and circular manufacturing approach. The company's 2021 Sustainability Report details progress towards its objective of zero-impact leather manufacturing, highlighting that it already makes the world's lowest-carbon leather and that it is well on its way to becoming carbon neutral by 2025 – 20 years ahead of Scotland's net zero ambitions. The Report describes SLG's various environmental initiatives – including its innovative thermal energy plant, which turns waste into heat, and its water treatment and recycling plant – and presents numerous supporting metrics.

SLG asked BSI to conduct an independent Customized Audit of its Sustainability Report to verify its accuracy, ensure its credibility to customers and other stakeholders, and differentiate the company from businesses that make unsubstantiated environmental claims – so-called 'greenwashing'.

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“We work towards all of the UNSDGs, and often cite data that BSI actively audits. We’ve been reporting such data consistently since 2004, but because of the general prevalence of greenwashing we wanted our Sustainability Report to undergo additional rigorous external audit by BSI. We’re seeing a mood change, with a need to present verified sustainability credentials, because environmental and social governance is getting bigger and bigger in the boardroom and beyond.”

**Dr Warren Bowden,
Head of Sustainability
and Innovation, Scottish
Leather Group**



Client challenge

Over the last two decades, SLG’s pioneering approach to sustainability has seen it cut CO2 per rawhide by 90%, and it is committed to lowering this figure even further. Its ‘green’ measures include minimizing transportation mileage, sourcing hides within the UK and Ireland, generating energy from by-products, and reducing waste to landfill. It has also developed innovative lightweight leather, enabling energy savings and reduced carbon emissions for itself and for customers.

A problem for responsible businesses, however, has been ‘greenwashing’ – some firms making false claims about the environmental impact of their products and processes. SLG’s challenge was to find a way to counter the prevalence of greenwash by demonstrating the accuracy and credibility of its 2021 Sustainability Report.

BSI solution

As a longstanding BSI client, with multiple BSI certifications to globally recognized standards – including ISO 14001 (environmental management), ISO 50001 (energy), and ISO 45001 (health & safety) – SLG knows the value of independent, third-party assurance. It decided to take this route again for its 2021 Sustainability Report, inviting BSI to conduct a Customized Audit of its content, including metrics on water and energy use, waste and recycling, worker health and safety, and social governance. Such data are also used in the lifecycle analysis of SLG’s products, which is key to understanding their impact, including their carbon footprint.

BSI audited all SLG’s reported metrics in line with ISO 14016 – which gives principles and guidelines for assuring information in environmental reports – demonstrating the reliability of the Sustainability Report beyond doubt.



Why BSI?

Dr Warren Bowden comments: “BSI is our default systems auditor. We’ve been through five audit cycles, so they know us very well – and we’ve built a lot of mutual trust.”