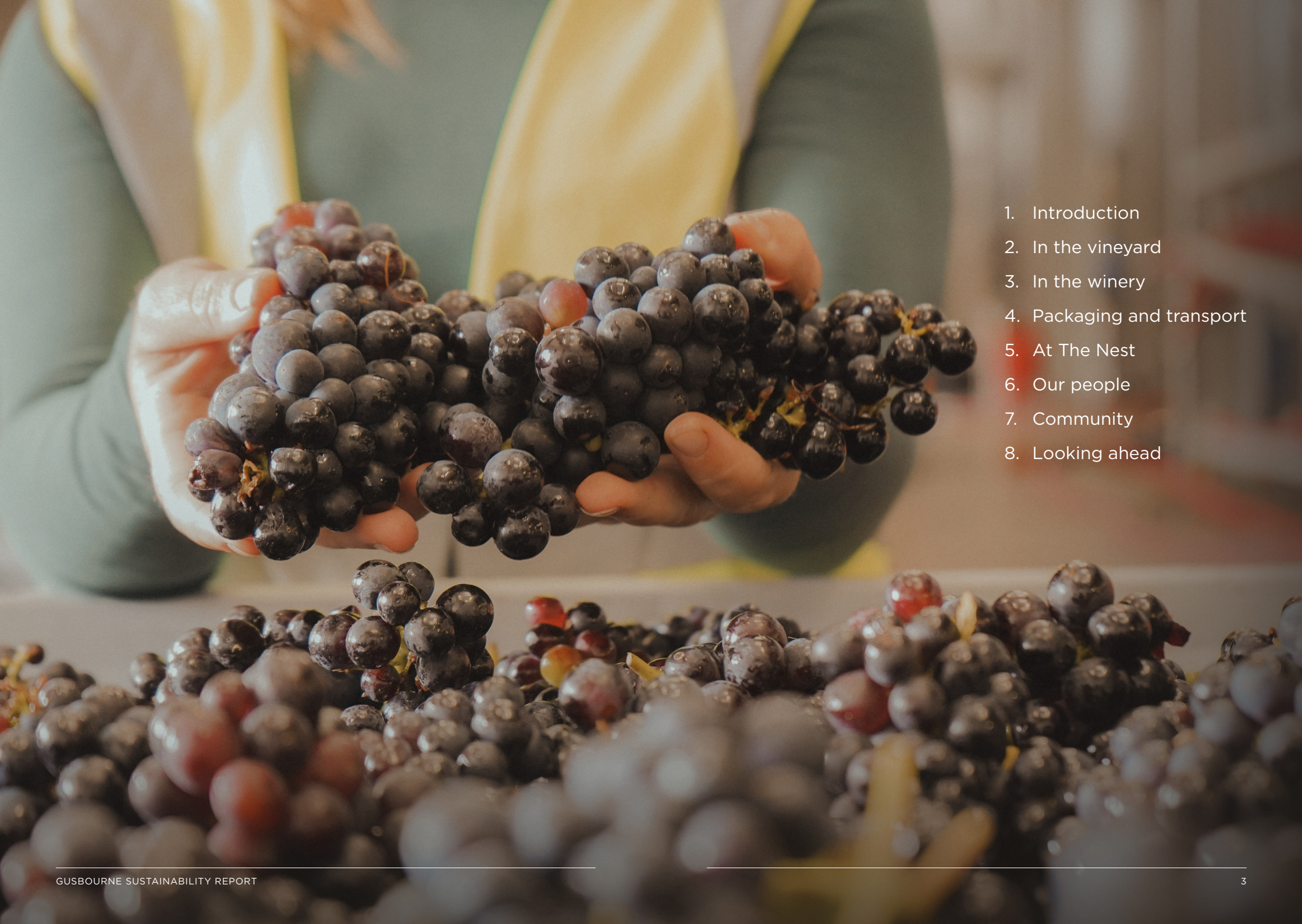




GUSBOURNE

SUSTAINABILITY REPORT



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FOR THE VINTAGES TO COME

At Gusbourne, sustainability is central to how we farm our fruit, craft and sell our wine and welcome our guests to the estate. Since we planted our first vines in 2004, putting nature at the heart of our decision-making has been a non-negotiable.

In 2024, we introduced our formal sustainability strategy, focused on five pillars: water, carbon, packaging, people and land. Our Executive Committee helped shape this strategy, and we commissioned an independent benchmarking report to highlight areas for improvement across each pillar. We're now researching, funding and delivering these developments.

Our guiding principle is that we want to improve the place where we work. That's why we're moving towards farming regeneratively, making incremental improvements each year.

We're a founding member of the Sustainable Wines of Great Britain initiative, set up to encourage English and Welsh wineries to ensure their practices are as sustainable and environmentally friendly as possible. We were amongst the first vineyards in the UK to achieve the SWGB accreditation in 2020 and received the gold certification in 2024 for continuous improvement.





IN THE VINEYARD

REGENERATIVE APPROACH AND SOIL MANAGEMENT

Our vineyard management focuses on protecting soil structure, biology and long-term vine health.

Each winter, flocks of Romney sheep graze our vineyards. This controls weeds without machinery, reducing tractor use and soil compaction. Their manure returns nutrients directly to the soil.

We have mapped soil structure across all vineyards and carry out full soil analysis every three years. This allows nutrients to be applied only where and when they are needed.

Between 2018 and 2023, we trialled tractor-mounted cultivators to reduce weed competition under the vines. Although herbicide use fell, soil compaction increased and soil biology was disrupted, leading to reduced vine

vigour. As a result, we adopted a no-till approach in 2023. Leaving the topsoil undisturbed allows organic matter to build stable structure, microbial life to recover and moisture to be retained more effectively.

HERBICIDES AND FERTILISERS

Under our no-till system, we currently use small, carefully monitored amounts of herbicide beneath the vine row to manage weed competition. This is a transitional measure. As under-vine cover cropping improves, we expect to further reduce and ultimately remove the need for herbicide use.

Soil nutrition is supported using natural inputs including compost, seaweed and composted chicken manure, alongside nutrients already provided through sheep grazing. These inputs support soil health and biological diversity.

MANUAL VINEYARD WORK

Most vineyard operations, from pruning through to harvest, are carried out by hand. Reducing reliance on machinery lowers fuel use and soil compaction, while ensuring our vineyard team closely observes every vine throughout the year.

ESTATE-WIDE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Vineyards are monocultures, so biodiversity must be supported across the wider estate. Alongside planted vines, we manage historic woodland, vineyard headlands, pasture and uncultivated areas. For example, in Boot Hill vineyard, a steep wild bank supports a wide range of wildlife. After repeated challenges establishing a wildflower meadow, we now use varied horticultural planting around the vines to achieve similar biodiversity benefits.

In 2025, we participated in the Big Farmland Bird Count for the first time, recording 30 bird species in Kent during a single 30-minute survey.

COVER CROPS

We have played a key role in an Innovate UK trial exploring how cover crops can improve soil health and vineyard biodiversity.

In recent years, we have trialled spring beans sown in alternate rows using direct drilling, avoiding cultivation and herbicide use. These crops provide biomass and fix nitrogen during the growing season.

Later in the season, we sow a herbal ley containing 18 species, including ryegrass and fescues. This improves soil conditioning, supports beneficial insects and increases plant diversity. Our cover crop strategy is reviewed annually and adapted based on performance.

POLLINATORS

We host an apiary in partnership with The London Honey Company, who only place hives where bees have access to a varied and safe food supply. Pollinators play an important role in maintaining a healthy and resilient ecosystem.



CANOPY AND YIELD MANAGEMENT

We manage the vine canopy to improve airflow and light penetration around grape bunches. Leaf removal creates a ventilated fruit zone, reducing fungal pressure and supporting even ripening.

Green harvesting is used to reduce bunch numbers where necessary, improving airflow and balancing crop load. This promotes earlier ripening and supports vine health going into winter.

In cooler vintages, any unripe fruit is dropped at harvest to conserve vine energy, allowing photosynthesis to support root and trunk repair before dormancy.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

We use Integrated Pest Management to monitor and control disease and pest pressure while minimising chemical inputs. For example, traps for spotted wing drosophila are set during winter to monitor populations and reduce pressure ahead of the growing season, avoiding the need for insecticide sprays in summer.

LEARNING, MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENT

In 2026, we joined the One Block Challenge, an initiative led by the Regenerative Viticulture Foundation. The programme allows growers to trial regenerative techniques within a single vineyard block, enabling learning without estate-wide risk.

We selected the Butness block due to its suitability for experimentation, particularly around soil health and vine resilience.

During 2026, trials will focus on improving the establishment of diverse cover crops using mixed species, alongside small-scale trials beneath the vine row. We will also trial biological fungicides, with careful monitoring in response to disease pressure.

Progress will be measured using soil structure analysis, earthworm counts and water infiltration testing.

“
We continue to review and reassess cover crop strategies vintage on vintage.

”

WATER MANAGEMENT

We operate a bio box wash-down station that filters and treats water from tractors after spray rounds, preventing contaminants from entering water systems.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

We work with Natural England, the Bumblebee Trust and the South East Rivers Trust to inform estate management decisions. Our unplanted land, woodland and pasture create opportunities for improved rainwater management, hedgerow planting, protection of rare fungi and enhanced woodland stewardship. We have previously been involved with the NIAB viticulture research and development consortium at East Malling, contributing to collaborative research and knowledge sharing across the English wine industry.

IN THE WINERY

ENERGY & RESOURCES

In 2026, both our Appledore and Amsbury sites are operating on 100% renewable electricity tariffs. This represents an additional investment compared to non-renewable supply, but we secured management support for this commitment.

We continue to review water and cleaning practices, and have introduced further staff training around efficiency.

Since 2024, we've used water meters to ensure we can measure and control all our winery water use. This means we can quickly identify and address any problems, such as leaks. It also gives us good data to identify and monitor high-demand periods in the year, such as bottling, filtration and harvest. Thanks to the introduction of a steamer to sanitise our winemaking equipment, we've been able to dramatically reduce the volume of water used in cleaning tanks. At harvest 2023, we reduced water use by 72% compared with 2022, though this has increased slightly in subsequent years.

TRAINING & PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

Each harvest we offer seasonal cellar-hands roles to attract and develop international winemaking talent. In 2025, three members of the team were returners from previous years – a strong endorsement of our seasonal work.



PACKAGING & TRANSPORT

GLASS BOTTLES

The wine industry – particularly sparkling wine – faces significant challenges when it comes to reducing the carbon footprint of glass bottles. Coloured glass bottles can be made using recycled glass (cullet). At present, our supplier uses 73.3% cullet in its production of coloured glass. You can find out more about their commitment to CSR here. All our glass bottles are sourced from suppliers who follow best practice when it comes to sustainability.

We are trialling a bottle washing partnership with Happy W Bottles. In 2024, we sent 13,500 used sparkling bottles for washing and sterilising. These are now returning to us and in 2025 we will bottle small parcels of sparkling wine in them. We will then monitor the results over the full ageing process, reporting back in 2028.

We are committed to lightweighting. We intend to move to a lighter format for our still wine bottles in 2027, reducing weight

by around 120g per bottle. For sparkling, reductions are more complex due to pressure requirements and equipment constraints. We are investigating potential savings of around 40g per bottle, which could equate to 10 to 12 tonnes of glass saved per harvest.

CORKS AND CLOSURES

We use a number of different bottle closures. In environmental terms, natural cork is a good news story. (One hectare of cork forest draws down 15 tonnes of CO₂ a year. In contrast, a screwcap generates 25 times more CO₂.) The majority of our corks are made by DIAM; you can find out more about DIAM's sustainable practices here. Natural Amorim cork, used in our Agrade wine are biodegradable and sequester carbon dioxide. You can find out more about Amorim's impressive commitment to sustainability here. Our Vinolok stoppers, used in our English Rosé, are fully recyclable. You can read more here.



CARDBOARD & OUTER BOXES

We have made significant changes to our product packaging. Packaging is essential to ensure our products arrive in pristine condition, looking smart and appealing, but we want to minimise waste wherever possible. We now use fully recyclable cardboard outer packaging and recyclable tape to close our boxes.

GIFT PACKAGING AND PRINT

Gift packaging is now optional at checkout, ensuring it is only provided when wanted. Our new cardboard gift boxes are fully recyclable. We print our dispatch notes on wildflower seed paper. All our printed materials are printed on FSC certified paper and are fully recyclable. We avoid the use of foils and finishes which can be problematic in the recycling process, working instead with a B-corp, FoilCo whose foils are repulpable. Our magazine, Vini-culture, is printed on FSC approved paper.

REDUCING SINGLE-USE

We've introduced Vinoplast reusable trays to transport wine between sites, eliminating the need for single-use cardboard in these internal transfers.

Our packaging working group continues to look for efficiencies. We are trialling lighter six-bottle boxes by removing inner pads and liners, and moving more orders to two-bottle formats rather than three.

LOGISTICS

We minimise the impact of our logistics by setting minimum order quantities, operating a hub-and-spoke distribution model with London City Bond in the UK, and shipping exclusively by land and sea for exports. A regional hub in Europe further improves efficiency.



AT THE NEST

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Sustainability is increasingly central to our visitor experience. In 2025, we trained all team members with information on our sustainability practices, and updated our tour documents to include more detail. Guests are increasingly curious and engaged, and we are proud to share the steps we are taking.

ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION

We are committed to making Gusbourne accessible to all. In May 2025, we completed an AccessAble assessment, now available [online](#) with photographs and detailed information about our facilities. For visitors with mobility issues, we provide golf buggies and designated disabled parking.

LOCALLY SOURCED PRODUCE

Our kitchen team work hard to source produce locally, from Rye Bay seafood to Romney Marsh lamb. We work closely with nine local producers and suppliers of local produce to ensure we use the best possible meat, fresh fish landed at Hastings, local vegetables, artisan bread and more. Our commitment is to source the majority of our produce from within 65 miles of Appledore. In The Nest, you'll find our toiletries are also locally produced. Our wool blankets – available for guest use or purchase – are made for us by Romney Marsh Wools.

WASTE & WATER

At The Nest, we have installed a Klargester BioDisc wastewater treatment system that uses microorganisms to break down organic matter so treated water can safely return to the water course. We also provide composting toilets in the vineyards for visitor use.

We use the Coravin wine preservation system to minimise wine waste, both onsite and in trade accounts.

Waste sorting is now fully in place – cardboard, paper, glass, plastics and general waste are separated, and organic kitchen waste is composted. We minimise food waste through pre-booked menus, with creative solutions such as turning excess cream into butter over Christmas closures. In 2025, we introduced a shredder to recycle 100% of our cellar door cardboard into compost.

SEASONAL PLANTING

Our grounds team work hard to ensure our hospitality spaces are alive with colour and interest year-round, even in the off-season months. Planting schemes are chosen with considerations such as: resilience when faced with our coastal winds and clay soils; plants which can be propagated on site; local or indigenous plants; plants to attract pollinators and provide year-round habitat.



We use our green waste and cardboard to create our own compost on-site; we also produce our own nettle-based liquid fertiliser for the landscape planting.

TREE PLANTING AND MANAGEMENT

We have planted fruit trees across the estate, along with an arboretum of native species such as silver birch. We were fortunate enough to be included in the Sakura cherry tree project – an initiative to promote a new era of UK-Japan friendship. We now have a small, beautiful cherry tree orchard adjacent to our Boot Hill Vineyard,

which visitors can walk through and enjoy on our self-guided tour.

Paths are mown to allow guests to wander around the arboretum, but we also maintain long-grass wildlife corridors to provide cover and shelter. One part of ancient woodland we manage is called Butness Wood, which is home to an array of flora and fauna, including wild boar. Where damaged trees have had to be removed from Butness, we've used the timber to create log-pile habitat for species such as slow-worms, adders and stoats.

OUR PEOPLE

Our people are at the heart of Gusbourne's sustainability journey.

- **Training and education** In 2025, 47 staff members completed in-house WSET courses, all passing successfully. A further 40 are expected to participate this year, including seasonal staff. We also run line management training and our Wine Moments programme, designed to engage staff at key moments in the vineyard and winery calendar.
- **Specialist development** We sponsor staff through qualifications including the Master of Wine and MBA, and our sustainability lead completed Cambridge University's Sustainability Leadership Programme.
- **Wellbeing** We offer BUPA and Medicash health insurance options, a wellbeing programme through The Drinks Trust, departmental Wellbeing Champions, and regular occupational health assessments for physically demanding roles.

- **Policies and culture** In 2024, we refreshed our company values with staff input and launched a new onboarding programme covering health and safety, sustainability and benefits. We have also updated policies on accessibility, DE&I, flexible working and anti-bullying.

- **Diversity** As of January 2025, 48% of management roles are held by women.

We want everyone at Gusbourne to feel happy, healthy and supported in their work. Beyond formal policies, we encourage a culture of connection and care through team socials, staff wine tastings and knowledge-sharing opportunities.



COMMUNITY

We formalised our Charitable Giving policy in 2025, tracking donations of wine and tours worth £23,285 (to July). Beneficiaries range from local groups such as Pilgrims Hospice and our cricket club to national charities including Macmillan Cancer Support and Teenage Cancer Trust.

We host industry colleagues and students for collaborative learning, from WSET Diploma visits to MW candidates. In 2025, we provided 10 days of work experience for school students at our sites.

Our team also contributes to industry leadership. For example, Jon works with NIAB on cover crop trials and Adam Wood is active in the WineGB producers' network. We are also proud members of the Wine Garden of England, working together with local producers on sustainable tourism.

We remain deeply connected to our community, participating in events such as the Spirit of Tenterden and Ashford Food Festivals and collaborating with local businesses

LOOKING AHEAD

In the year ahead, we'll be focused on areas of sustainability including:

Expanding biodiversity monitoring across all estates, including the One Block Challenge in Butness vineyard.

Continuing bottle reuse and light-weighting trials, with progress updates planned for 2026 and beyond.

Sharing the findings of the Warwick soil acoustics project.

Developing plans for viticultural apprenticeships.

Build on the success of staff training with new programmes in leadership, sustainability and wellbeing.

For this vintage, and all the vintages to come, we're committed to lessening our impact; improving the condition of our land and the wellbeing of our people.



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