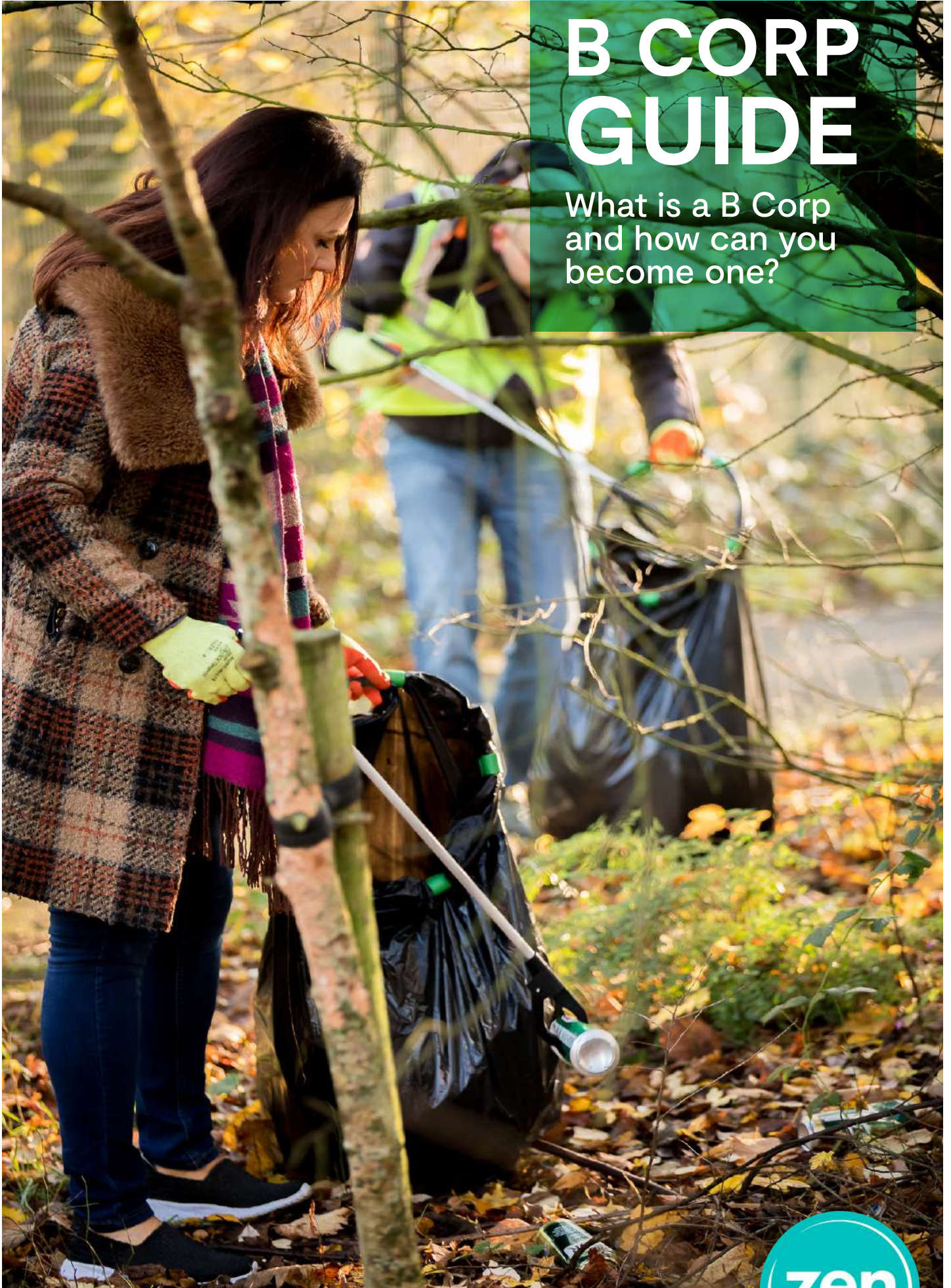


# B CORP GUIDE

What is a B Corp  
and how can you  
become one?



# Our Guide to Becoming a B Corp



In this guide we are going to look at the key areas involved in becoming a B Corp. What exactly is a B Corp and how can you become one? We also cover key benefits to becoming a B Corp and what is involved. This is your one stop guide to start your journey in joining one of a handful of worldwide companies looking to make an impact through their businesses.

Zen Internet achieved full B Corp status in 2020 with a mission and a commitment to work with clients, customers and the environment to do more good in the world. Having been through the full B Corp journey, they understood that the road can be difficult, and they want to support other businesses in their own journey. This guide has been created to offer support to small businesses in being able to “benefit” from B Corp.

## What type of companies become B Corps?

As of February 2022, there are more than 4500 certified B Corp companies worldwide. There are now over 700 B Corps in the UK, across 55 industries with over 39,000 employees. A B Corp certification is possible in any sector, from fashion to food. Some well-known brands that have become B Corps include Innocent Smoothies, Ben & Jerry's ice cream and Patagonia outdoor clothing.



## The B Corp Handbook is the place to start

If you're looking for some resources on your journey to becoming a B Corp, 'The B Corp Handbook: How you can use business as a force for good' should be high on your list. Written by Ryan Honeyman and Dr Tiffany Jana, this how-to guide was the winner of an IPPY Award for one of the Best Business Books of 2020. The authors spoke to more than 200 B Corp leaders from around the world to get their insight on obtaining B Corp certification and improving their social and environmental performance.

**+4500**  
Certified B Corp companies

## What is a B Corp?

B Corp stands for B Corporation, which is a certification that companies can apply for and receive following an evaluation of their social, sustainability and environmental performance, building a case for responsible business. The criteria include questions on employees, customers, suppliers, community, and the environment. For example, what are your employee engagement levels like? Or, does your company monitor its water usage?

**200**  
questions

## What is the BIA?

The B Impact Assessment (BIA) tool is an online tool for companies to measure their impact on a number of different factors, including its employees, customers, suppliers, community and the environment. It provides each company with valuable information to help understand the performance and what can be done to improve in the future.

### What do you need?

The BIA involves answering 200 questions around the subjects mentioned above. This is everything from your environmental management system to customer feedback mechanisms and employee satisfaction. In order to pass, the minimum score is 80 points. It's not often that companies achieve this the first time around, as there will usually be areas where improvement is needed.

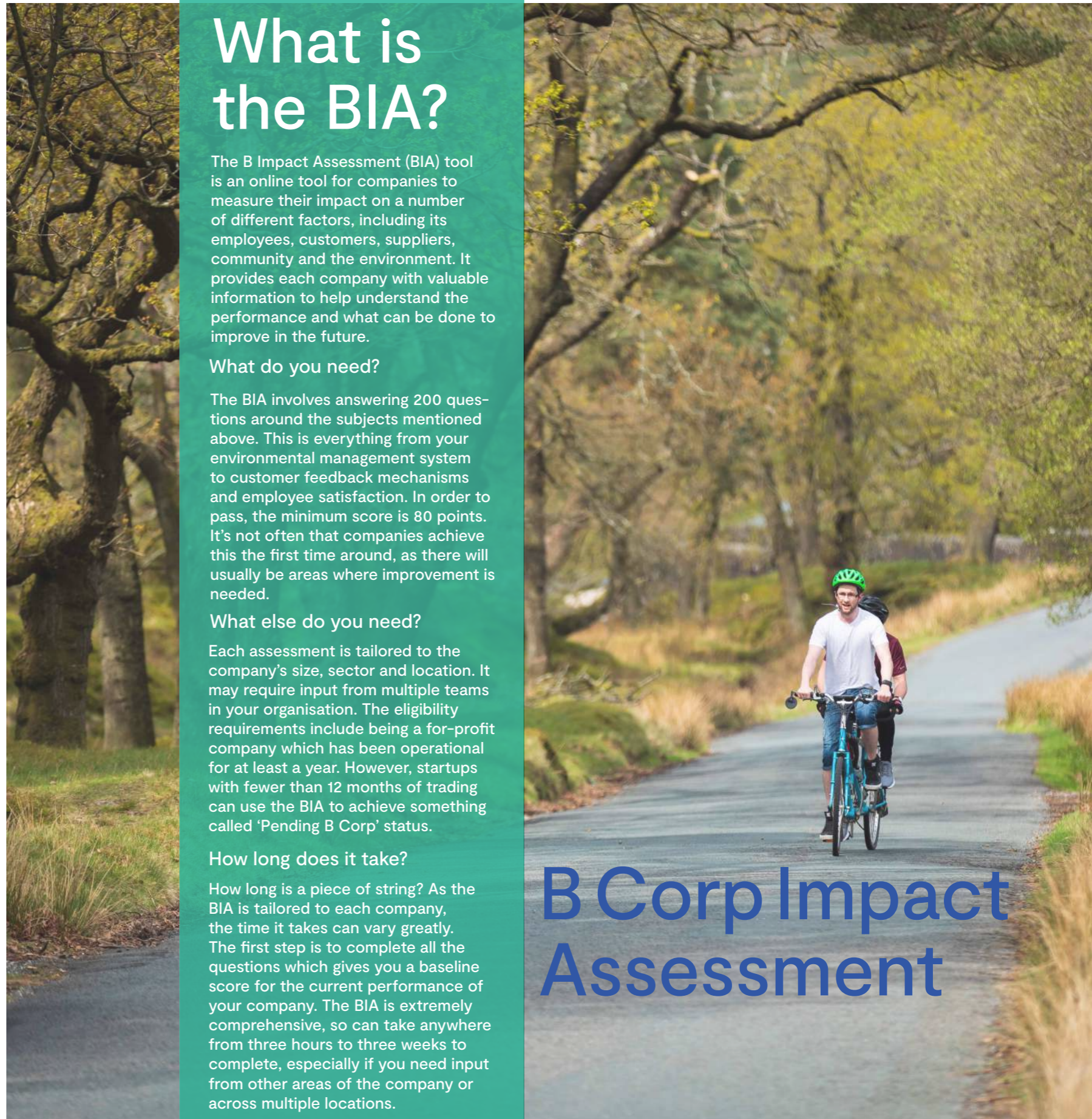
### What else do you need?

Each assessment is tailored to the company's size, sector and location. It may require input from multiple teams in your organisation. The eligibility requirements include being a for-profit company which has been operational for at least a year. However, startups with fewer than 12 months of trading can use the BIA to achieve something called 'Pending B Corp' status.

### How long does it take?

How long is a piece of string? As the BIA is tailored to each company, the time it takes can vary greatly. The first step is to complete all the questions which gives you a baseline score for the current performance of your company. The BIA is extremely comprehensive, so can take anywhere from three hours to three weeks to complete, especially if you need input from other areas of the company or across multiple locations.

# B Corp Impact Assessment

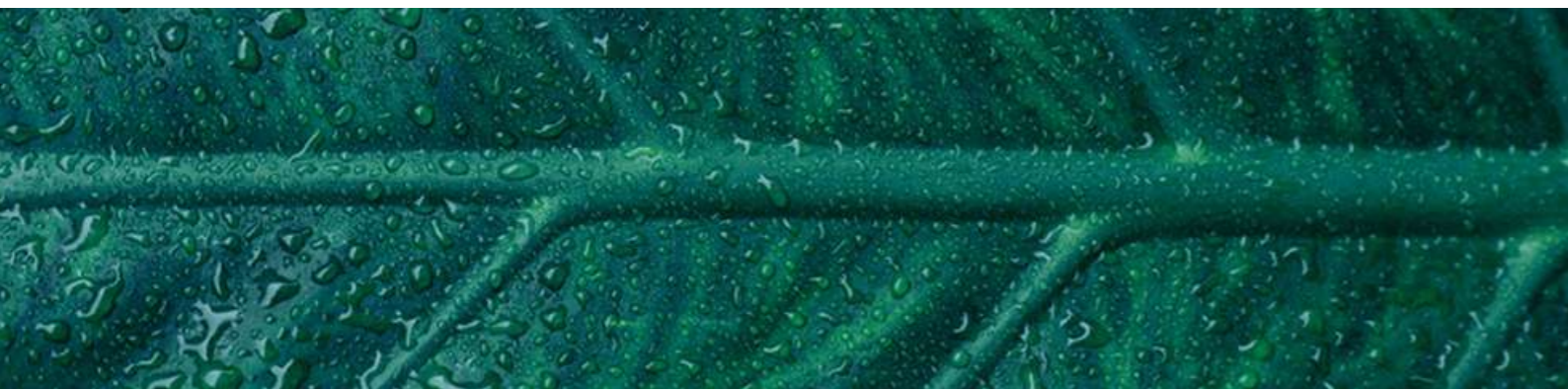


# B CORP IMPACT ASSESSMENT

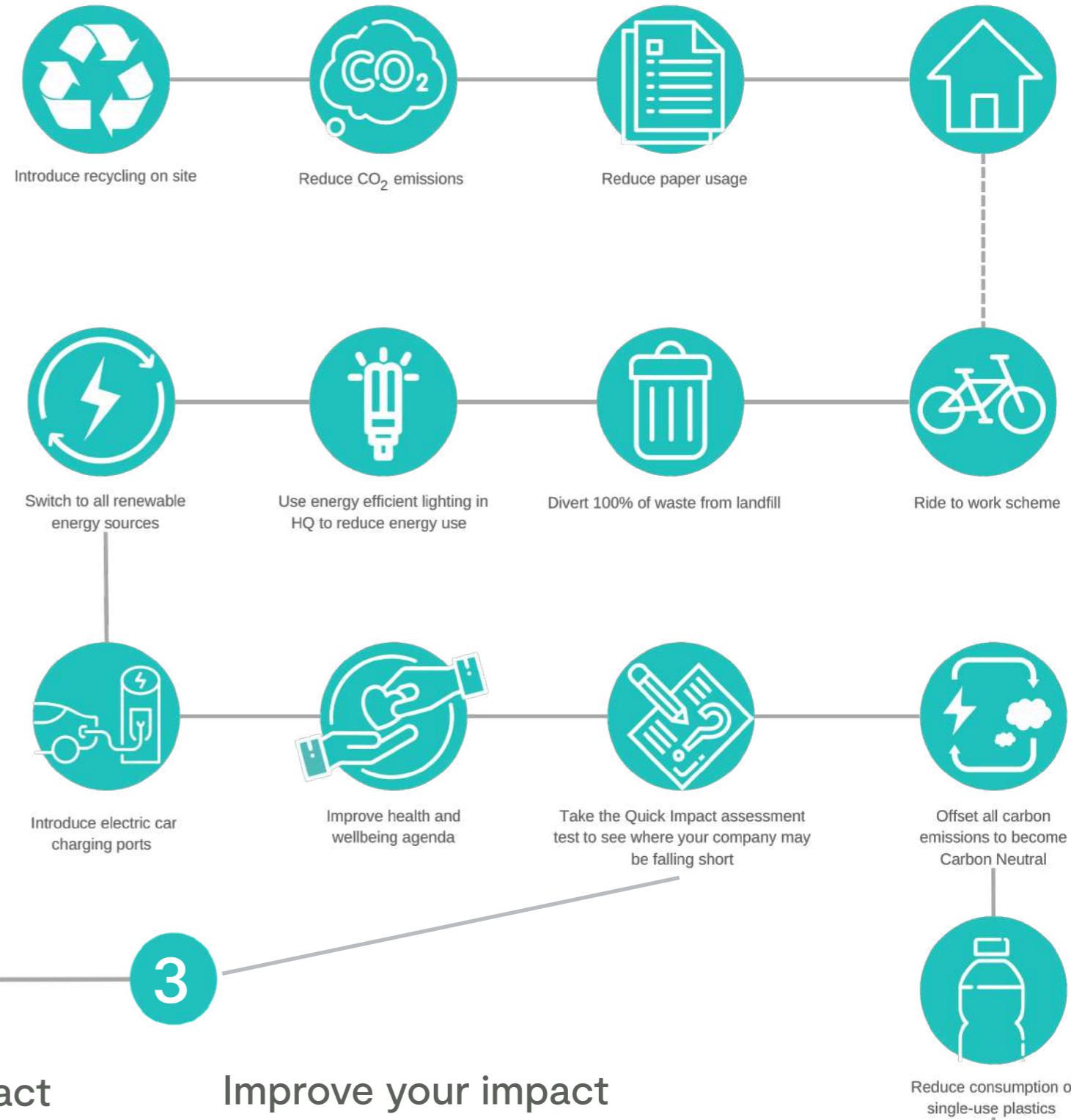
## How do you maintain certification?

In addition to the BIA, companies have ongoing commitments in order to keep their B Corp certification.

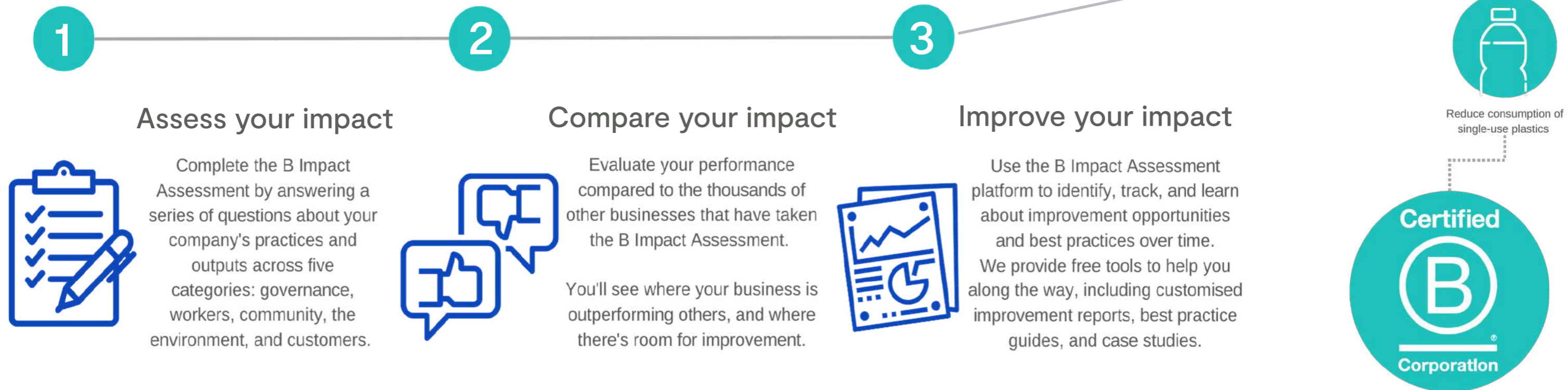
This includes adhering to the legal requirements. This is designed to protect the organisation's mission and values through things such as leadership changes. It also provides a legal basis by which directors have to consider all stakeholders (rather than just shareholders) when making decisions.



## What your journey could look like...



## On B lab you can:



# Is B Corp Right for Your Business?

## What makes a B Corp?

Getting B Corp certified shows the world in no uncertain terms what your company stands for. B Corps are companies that balance both profit and purpose, neither one comes before the other. B Corps are companies that are committed to embracing sustainability. They are held accountable by their shareholders for not just the profit, but the efforts towards the greater good. They are legally required to consider the impact of their decisions on their workers, customers, suppliers, community, and the environment.

## Why become a B Corp ?

Encourage social responsibility.

Being a B Corp isn't a 'set and forget' kind of deal. It encourages long term social and environmental responsibility. In our modern world, consumers want to buy from brands who do the right thing and care for people and the planet in a sustainable way. So when they buy from a B Corp, they know their hard earned money is going to a company that's working towards making a difference.

Make better financial decisions.

Once you're B Corp certified, you will have access to a whole database of information, including about how to build a sustainable business in a cost-effective manner. What's more, the certification process itself will allow you to recognise any areas of wasteful spending that you can work to reduce.

Attract top talent.

Your B Corp status is likely to catch the attention of job seekers who have the same values as your business. On top of that, B Corp certification puts value on employee-centric culture - so not only will you be able to attract great employees, you will be able to keep them too!

## 1 Make a commitment to looking after the planet

Recycling is great - but it isn't enough on its own. What kind of measures is your company willing to take to improve its sustainability? We're talking sustainable materials in your products and packaging, using local suppliers and working to reduce your carbon footprint.

## 2 Corporate culture matters

Creating a great company culture is more than just giving your employees good salaries. There are a whole host of factors that contribute to the overall company culture and how happy and engaged your employees are. This can include things like health benefits, flexible working, time off and career growth.

## 3 Giving back to the community

This is more than just fundraising or volunteering. At the heart of your organisation you want to do good, which could be anything from staff donating their personal and professional time to good causes, right down to making charitable donations to organisations who make a difference in your community.



Match your values to a B Corp

## What else?



### Can I start today?

You can find out more about the B Impact Assessment, and even get started on the official B Corp website. Not many companies pass the Impact Assessment the first time round, but it helps you identify areas of improvement so you can continue to make strides towards your goals.

# Get Your Business on Board

## Create a business case

Becoming a B Corp is not something you can simply jump into - it's an important business decision that needs the proper planning in place before you start to make sure everyone in your company is on board. A solid business case is vital to ensure it is aligned with your business strategy and goals, as well as allowing progress and outcomes to be tracked.

## Get stakeholder buy-in

The people who work for you are as much a part of the journey to B Corp as anyone. The B Corp certification is about impacting the life of your staff for the better by providing them a safe, inclusive environment, to help their development and increase retention. Share the B Corp vision and message with your teams and get them supporting the journey.

## Join a community

By joining the B Corp community, you will be joining a community that sets the highest of standards for businesses that care about people and the planet. Your organisation will find value in collaborating with other B Corps, sharing best practices and ultimately building a collective voice.



## Attract top talent

Over the next decade or so, millennials will make up the majority of our workforce. Research shows that this generation wants to work for companies with which they share important values, so that they can bring their true selves to work. Many B Corps have noted that after a company certifies, the quality of hires, retention rate and employee engagement vastly improves.

## Build a voice and credibility

Stand out in the marketplace with a B Corp certification. You will put yourself ahead of competitors as a forward-thinking company, giving you an edge in gaining important press coverage.



# Impact Areas

## Governance

This part of the Impact Assessment looks at your company's overall mission. This includes the ability of your company to protect your mission, and how well you formally consider stakeholders in decision making.



## Community

This impact area is all about your company's impact on and engagement with its community. This 'community' covers not only where it operates, but also where it hires from and sources from. There are a variety of topics that are covered in the Impact Assessment including but not limited to diversity, equality, charitable giving and supply chain management.

## Environment

The Environment impact area assesses your company's overall impact on the environment, as well as the overall environmental management practices. This is everything from air, climate, biodiversity, water and land. Included in this is the direct impact of your company's operations, as well as supply chain and distribution channels (if that also applies).



## Customers

How do you take care of your customers? This area examines the quality of your products or services, data privacy and feedback channels. This area also takes into consideration the products or services that have been designed to address a particular social issue, such as health or educational products.

## Staff

Do you look after your staff? This area looks into how your company contributes to its employees financial security, health, career development and satisfaction, to name a few.



# Small Business and B Corp

In a time of global warming and more social initiatives, looking to sign your business up to becoming a B Corp is a great way to show your commitment to social change and be a force for good.

Making your small business a B Corp can offer a number of advantages not just for your business but for your customers and community. As it's an initiative that is beneficial for all, start-ups and small businesses should think about aligning their vision, culture and company goals with B Corp from the start. Our guide has outlined the ways in which B Corp can be achieved and the reasons why – but how can this be achieved as a smaller business?

## Is it worth it?

B Corp is a large network of companies large and small that are committed to being a force for good and for change

## You can get started today



One study showed that businesses with higher racial diversity brought in nearly 15 times more revenue than those with the lowest racial diversity

## Advantages of becoming a B Corp for small businesses

### Governance

Lots of small businesses make a commitment, when starting out, to be more environmentally friendly or to interact with their community, but this can be difficult to implement or to understand how it can be incorporated into everyday business life.

The B Corp certification offers a framework of how to make this a reality. It helps small businesses to create a mission statement on not just what they want to achieve, but how to achieve it.

### Workers

Finding talent and retaining talent is tough for any business owner, but more so for the small business who may not yet have access to the benefits offered by big business.

The B Corp certification offers small businesses the framework on how you can motivate, attract, and most importantly retain that top talent. The framework shows you how you can offer a living wage (not a minimum wage), further training and education, career progression and flexible working that not only attracts the staff but encourages loyalty and retention.

### Community

Ensuring a business shows inclusion, diversity and equality is a key aim of the B Corp. These areas are a key philosophy of the B Corp journey but understanding and implementing these values, are not easy when setting up a small business.

Becoming a B Corp and implementing these values can provide:

- More variety in people's perspectives
- Innovation and creativity in your business through your staff
- More opportunities for better decision making
- Increased profits

## Environment

The B Corp movement recognised the importance of offering flexible and hybrid working before the world was turned upside down by COVID 19. The importance of these offerings was not just about providing flexibility to staff but also monetary savings, environmental impact, and operational efficiencies.

Applying flexible and hybrid working practices doesn't just benefit your internal team – it can also benefit contractors and third party members. Most importantly you are also offering this to your clients, while working more flexibly, watching costs, and ultimately reducing emissions.

## Customers

When starting a small business, the focus is to provide a product or service to market that is perfect. But no one can know it is perfect until it is tested on real customers. Chances are that your product or service will need tweaks to be as perfect as it can be.

Becoming a B Corp allows your small business to offer more to their customers while you make your offering perfect. The B Corp certification allows you to create a system of customer satisfaction, monitoring, and feedback to get that all important information to improve.

Not only that, you are offering your customers more with your business. They are purchasing your offering while buying into a business committed to higher values.

# How Can a Small Business Be a B Corp?

## Why would you do it?

Although there are no tax benefits to becoming a B Corp, its status does change the perception of the business and offer more to your colleagues, clients and culture. A B Corp certification shows your business's commitment to be a force for good (B in B Corp stands for Benefit). The certification shows a commitment to sustainability initiatives, equitable economic practices and community outreach. The B Corp status, unlike other initiatives, offers a holistic approach to offering change in our world through your business.

The biggest advantage is it can be applied to any business whether you are e-commerce or services based, for profit or not for profit.

The process is no small undertaking, takes time to achieve and does have financial commitments.

Your start up one time submission fee is £150 and also incurs annual fees – although these are proportionate to your company's revenue.

## Prospective B Impact Assessment

Your first step is to complete and submit the B Impact Assessment, where you will learn about B Corp standards and start to identify what procedures and practices you will need to implement. Becoming a Pending B Corp is your first step on your journey and still leaves you the option as to whether you wish to continue the B Corp journey after a year.

## Legal accountability

As a future B Corp you must incorporate the stakeholder governance into the legal structure of your small business. This ensures that your business is legally accountable to your staff, your customers, and surrounding communities – not to mention to the planet!

## Sign and pay

Once you have completed your assessment, B Lab will provide a contractual agreement that outlines the details of Pending B Corp status. The fees for Pending B Corp are determined by your local B Lab or Sistema B organisation.



# How to Use Your B Corp Certification



“Zen applied for B Corp certification as it aligned perfectly with our core values as an organisation. It’s really important to us at Zen that we strive to make a positive difference to the world, rather than focusing solely on profits.”  
– Zen CEO, Paul Stobart

## Build your brand

Being B Corp certified acts as another proof point for all the great things you do as a business. It covers so many important areas – customers, suppliers, people, environment and community – providing great content to demonstrate the good you want to do in the world.

It also gives great content for pushing out across your social media channels. For B Corp month which takes place every March, B Lab (the company behind B Corp) provides an entire toolkit of usable content to help tell your story.

## Build your partners

Partnering with fellow B Corps helps spread the word about the community of like-minded

businesses that balance purpose and profit. It’s also a great way to get content liked and shared across social media, reaching audiences above and beyond your own.

## Attract customers

If your company cares about sustainability and ethical business practices, you are probably already attracting customers who agree with your cause. However, getting B Corp certified allows you to demonstrate your company’s commitment to your ongoing efforts. At Zen we are incredibly proud of our TrustPilot Trust Score, which far exceeds the industry average.

## Attract staff

Employee engagement is an important element of being a

B Corp. A B Corp will typically be a business that provides excellent benefits to its people such as great pension, private healthcare, generous annual leave, financial tips and tools. At Zen we put our people first. Each new member of staff can expect fair reward for their hard work and an inspiring workplace.

## Make a difference

A B Corp business will typically be one with a collective desire to have a positive impact on people and the planet. It is one that believes business can be a force for good. Here at Zen we are Carbon Neutral, and are certified to ISO 14001, which gives us an excellent framework for improvements and for setting targets which benefit the environment.



## Impact Assessment (every 3 years)

1. Legal side
2. Building on your B Corp (going net zero etc)



## Keeping Your B Corp Certification

You’ve done it! You’re finally a B Corp certified business. But being a B Corp is not a ‘set and forget’ kind of deal, it’s a long-term commitment with sustainability one of the key areas to maintain. To maintain your certification status as a B Corp, you will need to recertify every three years. Here’s what you will need to do to prepare for your recertification review:

### 1. Verify that you still meet the legal requirements

Look through the legal requirements for your company in relation to your location and corporate form. This will be all available in your B Corp Agreement document.

### 2. B Corp Impact Assessment Report

In the middle of each three-year term, your organisation will need to complete an Assessment Report. The report is a midway point which helps you track your progress, to ensure you are scoring the same if not better than the previous year.

### 3. Complete the most up to date version of the B Impact Assessment

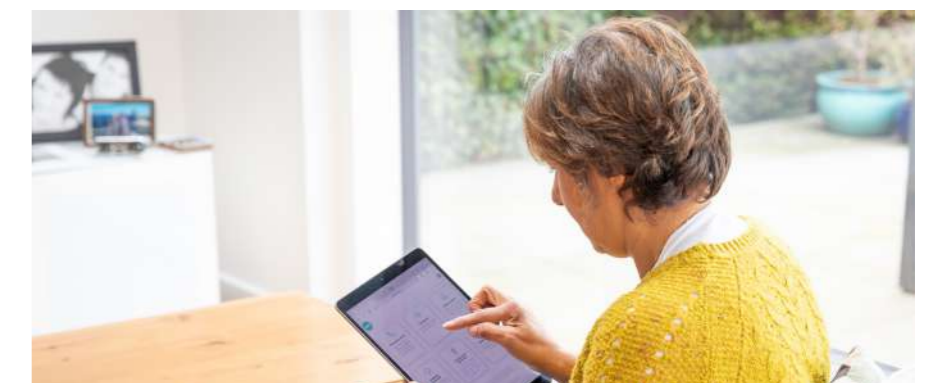
Your company will already have an account with archived data, so you will not need to create a new account to do this. Simply log in to the assessment portal and update with current information about your company. We recommend that you submit this within three months of your recertification date, which can be found on your online account.

### 4. Provide any supporting documentation

Once you have submitted your assessment for review, a member of the B Lab team will send you instructions about how to upload supporting documentation onto the platform, and any other relevant next steps.

### 5. Standards review team

The Standards Review Team will send you guidance about the next steps. This could be anything from a review call to a request for extra documentation. The recertification will not be complete until the team has all the information they need, which usually takes up to a few months after the Assessment has been submitted. After the team has confirmed the process is complete, you will be sent an updated B Corp Agreement to be signed by you and your team.



# B Corps Work A Zen Case Study



We have been working hard to make a positive impact on the world around us since we were first founded nearly 30 years ago by our Founder & Chairman Richard Tang in 1995



## Taking care of our customers

We regularly top the Which? table as the most recommended broadband provider for customer service. We believe in rewarding customer loyalty and our 'price for life' means that the monthly price a customer pays for their broadband will never increase, as long as they keep the same service.



# £100,000

Raised for charity between 2008-2021



## Working towards a better environment

From an environmental or sustainability perspective, we started recycling in the office in 2008 and have achieved several milestones on our sustainability journey ever since. Zen was certified as a B Corp in August 2020, and we are proud to do the right thing, by each other and the world around us.

We have achieved so much since becoming a B Corp. We achieved Carbon Neutral status in 2020, and are now on a path to Net Zero.

## Looking after our people

Our people are very loyal and career development is widely encouraged. Diversity & Inclusion is really important to us and that is why we have a number of networking groups with the aim of improving individual and organisational understanding of the different aspects of diversity, as well as creating a great place to work. Zen Internet is the only Which? Recommended Broadband Provider 2022 that has also been recognised by Great Place to Work®, the global authority on workplace culture.

We have raised over £100,000 for charity between 2008 and 2021, and our 'Zen in the Community' group has a number of plans in place to support various local projects over the coming months and years.







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