

Annual Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement – 2021

Pursuant to the Modern Slavery Act 2015

Overview

This is our fourth annual statement to outline the steps we are taking as an organisation to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in our business or the supply chains which serve it. This statement explains what we did in our financial year (FY) ending 31 July 2021 and gives details of our planned actions for our current financial year ending 31 July 2022.

We are a family business and care very genuinely for the welfare of our colleagues, customers and all those who work in our supply chain providing goods or services.

Last year we wrote that we were very mindful of the disruption to the lives and livelihoods of so many people all over the world as a result of Covid-19. Supply chains everywhere had been challenged. We recognise that the pandemic may have had a detrimental effect on the campaign to end modern slavery. Travel and factory inspections are more difficult and abuses even less visible. Therefore, it is more important than ever that companies are alive to the issue and committed to play their part in eradicating this evil, even at a point when many companies are trying to survive and rebuild their own businesses and have less time and resource available. The pandemic continued to have a disruptive effect on supply chains throughout 2021 and the outlook for 2022 remains challenging.

Last year we reported that we had joined Sedex, in conjunction with the buying group of which we are members, The Tillington Group. FY 21 has been our first full year of membership of Sedex and further details of how we are using this resource are outlined below. In FY20 we redrafted our supplier documents and those of the Tillington Group to make sure that suppliers are aware of our supplier code of conduct. Progress in signing up suppliers to our new documents is explained below.

Our Business

Our company is registered in the UK and our business comprises 16 garden centres with café bars, all located in the South East of England. We are therefore governed and regulated by UK law. We do not employ anyone outside the UK. We take pride in complying with both the letter and the spirit of UK employment law and best practice and seek to encourage healthy working relationships and a culture of openness throughout our business. This approach is backed up by relevant policies, including our whistle-blowing policy.

We apply robust recruitment processes. We check that all those we employ have the correct documentation to demonstrate they are legally entitled to work in the UK. All our staff are paid above the minimum wage and have reached school leaving age. We do not use agency workers, other than for short term sickness or vacancy cover. Whenever we need agency staff, we employ reputable UK employment agencies.

Our Modern Slavery Policy

Our policy is a zero-tolerance approach to Modern Slavery. It is vital that all our business relationships are conducted ethically, with integrity and transparency. We are committed to implementing and enforcing effective systems and controls to ensure that Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking are not taking place anywhere within our business or its supply chains.

Our Supply Chain

Our supply chain is complex because of the range of plants and other goods we offer for sale to our customers and the range of food we serve in our café bars. Well over 80% of the plants we sell come from UK nurseries. Most of our other products are purchased from UK suppliers with some from EU and EEA suppliers. A very small minority is purchased from non-UK/EU/EEA sources.

What actions have we taken since our last statement and what actions are we taking?

1. Tool kits and Training

In 2018 we registered with Stronger2gether, a collaborative organisation comprising many well-known retailers, other brand leaders and charities which provides guidance, training and other tools on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. The senior head office team including the Chairman, Managing Director, Finance Director, Purchasing Director and the Heads of HR, Marketing, Operations and Catering undertook a full day training course given by a Stronger2gether tutor in 2019. This training was cascaded down to our garden centre managers.

As a result of lockdown and the subsequent constraints of getting our business back on track while respecting social distancing way, our training programme has been severely curtailed in 2020 and again in 2021. We shall re-visit our anti modern slavery training during the course of the current financial year, including a refresher for those who have already been given training and the introduction of an e-learning module.

2. Our Supply Chain

Whilst we have clear visibility of our direct suppliers it becomes more complex further down our supply chain.

We are members of a buying group, called the Tillington Group, which comprises like-minded family-owned garden centre businesses who co-operate in some buying and marketing activities. None of the other member businesses are yet of a size that they have to adopt an annual Modern Slavery statement. Despite this, Modern Slavery has been discussed as a group by the senior principals of those businesses and their HR professionals. All members are aligned in wanting to do our best to eliminate modern slavery in our supply chains.

In order to assist us in taking steps to identify possible issues in our supply chain the Tillington Group are members of Sedex. Sedex is a global membership organisation dedicated to driving improvements in ethical and responsible business practices in global supply chains. It assists buyers and suppliers to share and exchange data, helping to manage social and environmental risks better within their supply chain, and positively impact responsible sourcing. Sedex provides a range of tools, services, guidance and training to help companies map and manage risks in their supply chain, with over 50,000 members in 155 countries, across 35 industry sectors, including food, agriculture, financial services, clothing, packaging and chemicals.

Over the coming year we are checking which of our retail suppliers with whom we turn over more than £300,000 at cost are registered with Sedex and encouraging any that are not registered to do so.

3. Supplier Code of Conduct

Our supplier code of conduct has been approved by the Board. The Tillington Group has also adopted a corresponding code of conduct. Our supplier documents and those of the Tillington Group have been re-drafted to draw the attention of suppliers to the code and ensure that it is accepted. We expect our suppliers of goods or services to accept our code of conduct or be able to demonstrate equally robust policies and procedures in their own business.

During the year in excess of 100 suppliers signed up to our new supplier documents. This figure comprises new suppliers and existing suppliers with whom we are renewing our supply agreements. We have actively prioritised new suppliers, suppliers who are significant in terms of value and those who might be considered higher risk. In the case of the small number of lines we are direct sourcing from the Far East every supplier has signed up to our new supplier documents. In addition, over 50% of suppliers of Christmas goods have signed our new documents. To date none of the suppliers in any category have resisted signing up to our new documents.

Over the next year we shall be focusing on our nursery suppliers and logistics partner as well as continuing to work down the list of suppliers by value and risk profile explained above.

If we find instances of non-compliance and/or non-cooperation we will consider what remedial action to take on a case by case basis. This may mean we decide not to take on a new supplier or to cease to trade with an existing supplier. We will also monitor suppliers failing to cooperate or considered high risk. Where suppliers are manufacturing in countries where modern slavery is a known to be prevalent, we will seek further assurance and evidence of compliance from those suppliers and/or through the Sedex scheme as applicable. Such suppliers will be considered high risk until satisfactory evidence of compliance is received. We are actively considering de-listing one particular supplier at present.

We shall continue to measure our progress and effectiveness going forward and continue to raise awareness of the risks amongst relevant members of our team, our suppliers and our buying group.



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Approved by the Board of Directors on 18th November 2021