

D. J. Squire & Co., Limited

Section 172 Statement

Year Ended

31 July 2023

Company Number 00316151

D. J. Squire & Co., Limited

Section 172 Statement

1. Introduction

In promoting the success of the Company as a whole, the Board has had regard, in its decision-making, to broader stakeholder interests in the areas identified under section 172 of the Companies Act 2006 and listed under Section 2 below. This is reflected in the agendas for, and decisions made in, the four formal Board Meetings held in the year ended 31 July 2023, as well as in informal discussions between Board members during the year.

2. Stakeholder Interests

2.1 Likely consequences of any decision in the long term Maintain a reputation for high standards of business conduct

Context

The Company has been in business since 1936. As a family business, long-term thinking is integral to our decision-making processes. The Squire family name is, literally, over the door, and therefore the Company's reputation is paramount. We are committed to be the best we can be in everything we do, not cutting corners in any area of compliance with laws and regulations. We follow both the letter and the spirit: for instance, on alcohol licensing we have far more personal licence holders per site than most other operators. We review our policies regularly rather than letting them gather dust.

We have consciously limited our geographical scope, so that Board members and other senior staff can visit our Centres often and build strong relationships with our teams and our local communities. We have always sought to maintain our independence of action, in for instance our approach to debt and bank security, or our preference for freehold sites over leasehold, which allows us to invest continually in our Centres, or in our measured approach to acquisitions. We seek to build long-term relationships with our customers, and with suppliers also – we feel we are in business with them for the long run.

Board Actions in the year under review

- Kept Gender Pay Gap reporting under review.
- Carried out annual approval of Modern Slavery Policy and Human Trafficking Statement, and approval of supplier Code of Conduct, in November 2022.

2.2 Interest of employees

Context

The Company has always sought to treat its staff well, and beyond statutory requirements. We ensure that pay levels are maintained above statutory rates. We have an annual bonus scheme, based on Company profitability, which (though non-contractual) has been paid in good times and bad. We have a strong commitment to training and development, including our own apprenticeship scheme.

We use an annual employee survey to measure staff attitudes, and act on the results. Members of the Group Office team visit the Centres regularly, with a more formal "Let's Talk" session for the staff at each Centre, involving the Managing Director and the HR Manager, held twice a year.

A formal meeting (face-to-face or virtual) is held 6-8 times per year between the Group Office team and the Centre Managers in order to communicate initiatives and ideas throughout the organisation and obtain feedback from our people on the ground.

D. J. Squire & Co., Limited

Board Actions in the year under review

- Discussed Health and Safety, and HR matters, at three Board Meetings.
- Discussed detailed review of accident statistics, and presentation of Health and Safety Plan for 2023.
- In running our Centres, maintained staff and customer safety as our top priority.
- Maintained our hybrid working from home/office policy for office staff.

2.3 Foster business relationships with suppliers, customers and others

Context

Our long-term focus extends to all our business partners and to our customers.

We seek long-term relationships with our suppliers, many of whom have traded with us for decades. We are especially keen to protect local UK growers, and work with other smaller suppliers. We seek to deal fairly with all suppliers, with transparent terms of business, especially in the areas of rebates and payment terms. We have implemented our Modern Slavery policy and supplier code of conduct to ensure that our suppliers are also operating their businesses in a legal and sustainable manner.

We banked with the same Bank for the entire life of the business until the period under review and hope to build a similarly durable relationship with our new bankers, HSBC.

We also seek to develop a loyal, long-term customer base, and use multiple methods to promote customer engagement, including a twice-yearly customer survey, our monthly customer email newsletters, our three magazines, distributed through the Royal Mail at key periods, and other leaflets and social media activity.

Via the Tillington Group of Garden Centres we seek to achieve economies of scale in our purchasing.

We engage more broadly through our active membership of our trade associations, the Garden Centre Association (GCA) and the Horticultural Trade Association (HTA), which we believe have both been effective in promoting the industry and influencing Government decision-making in relation to our sector.

Board Actions in the year under review

- Continued our support of the Surrey Hills Enterprise Trust to help promote local suppliers and source more local products.
- Placed an emphasis on sourcing local plants and products. Over 85% of our plants come from UK nurseries, many of them very close to our Centres.
- Others as stated in section 2.1 above.

2.4 Impact of our operations on the community and environment

Context

Working with local communities has always been a watchword for our business.

The Company continues to extend charitable support to local organisations and to 'In Blooms'. Our support has assisted numerous schools, Surrey Wildlife Trust, The Lightbox, Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice, the Greenfingers Charity, The Richmond Concert Society, our nominated Centre charities of the year and many others. During the year we continued our support of Perennial (formerly the Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society) through their partnership scheme.

We partner with Planet Mark to have our current sustainability performance certified and create multiple projects to improve that performance over time. In addition to our Group Sustainability Manager, each centre has at least one sustainability champion taking a lead at local level.

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We support local suppliers (especially for food and plants) and contractors wherever possible, in order to minimise transport miles and emissions.

Board Actions in the year under review

- Repeated Planet Mark accreditation.

2.5 Act fairly as between members of the company

Context

There is just one class of equity; there are only six shareholders; and the three shareholders on the Board represent 60% of the votes. Shareholder directors are remunerated fairly in line with the duties and responsibilities assumed. All UK-based shareholders regularly attend the AGM, are regular customers of the business, and take an active interest in its progress through informal discussion with the director shareholders.

We follow a prudent and consistent dividend policy, paying out a low percentage of profit before tax in normal years.

Board Actions in the year under review

- Maintained a prudent approach to the payment of dividends during the year, and to the proposed final dividend.