



**TREE
STATION**
Making Wood Work

A Social Enterprise in Arboriculture,
Woodland Management, Biomass
Fuels and Timber.

Ethical Policy

Version control and board approval					
Rev	Date	Changes	Prepared by	Approved by	Signature
1.0	09/07/13	n/a	M.Séverin	P.Benn, <i>on behalf of the board</i>	
1.1	09/04/14	Update status of Community Benefit Policy + update footer	M.Séverin	P.Benn, <i>on behalf of the board</i>	
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Contents

1. Policy's purpose and use
2. Our core values and ethical positions
3. Ethical commitment and principles
4. Implementation

Appendix A: Arboricultural services mindmap

Appendix B: Arboricultural services decision tree

Appendix C: Examples of ethical dilemmas

Appendix D: Third party activities of concern

1. Policy's purpose and use

This policy details our ethical values and provides tools to assist decision making in the context of conflicting demands. It also serves as a commitment to operate the business in accordance with specific ethical principles.

Our behaviour and the values that underpin them are not new: the TreeStation was founded on ethical values, and this is reflected in our mission, business model/governance, and our actions/trading practices. This policy documents the TreeStation's approach and is intended both for internal use and public information.

In a world where greenwashing (act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service), dishonest marketing and misleading branding are becoming standard, we feel it is important for us to provide our customers, partners, investors and the community in general with a clear and explicit statement of where our values lie and how we put them in practice, day after day.

Every aspect of our work is governed by this policy, from the way we run the most mundane functions of the business to the selection of suppliers, the types of work we do and the organisations and people we work with.

In an ideal world, the TreeStation would completely separate itself from organisations with what we see as unethical practices, but we have to accept that, in some situations, we will need to compromise. This policy gives guidance on striking a balance between meeting financial stability and maintaining integrity to our values.

In some rare cases, the executive team may need to deviate from this policy, but will then explain its choices openly and transparently.

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This policy has been approved by the Board of Directors. It will be reviewed by the Board from time to time to reflect the changing world we operate in, but will always retain its underpinning values and principles. These changes may be in attitudes to the natural environment and climate change or other aspects of our society, for example the business and political environments. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the management team.

2. Our core values and ethical positions

The TreeStation is part of the growing movement towards living and working in an environmentally and socially conscious way. We believe that, through the decisions we make, we can take personal responsibility for shaping the world we live in and encourage others to make positive changes. As a not-for-profit organisation, we genuinely believe that the following values should come before excessive profits or personal gain:

2.1. Environment

See also our [Environmental Policy](#), which is based on this ethical policy.

We all depend on the planet and its natural resources and systems. We believe that we should treat them in a way that preserves/enriches them rather than depletes or damages them, both as an end in itself and for the sake of future generations. We believe that developing renewable energies, organic farming, energy efficiency, and water conservation can help reduce our society's ecological impact. We are concerned by human dependence on fossil fuels, the rise of extreme energy procurement technologies (e.g. fracking, nuclear, tar sands), resource depletion and ecosystems collapses. We are also worried about mass consumerism, water shortage, and the manufacturing and use of toxic substances.

Our core activities have a positive impact on key environmental issues such as climate change, energy, waste management, biodiversity and deforestation. We are aware of the negative environmental and social impact of some forms of biofuel, and will not engage in such trade.

2.2. Human rights

Respect for human rights is crucial to positive social change. As such, we believe that everyone has a right to live in peace, without discrimination, exploitation, fear or forced labour.

We value all our colleagues and the people we work with, and adhere to the principles laid out in the [Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code](#) within the limits of our industry. We recognise that treework is a [dangerous industry](#) and seek to mitigate these risks to provide safe working conditions within the constraints of our industry (see our [Health & Safety policy](#)).

We believe that we can make a positive impact on people's lives by avoiding unnecessary consumption of goods that promote resources-related conflicts, treating our staff with respect and demanding they respect others, and avoiding working with organisations known to be involved in human rights breaches.

2.3. Community and business model

Our business model is based on empowerment, co-operation, mutual help and positive impact for the local or wider community. Co-operatives, not-for-profits and social enterprises have been shown to bring social and economic benefit to local communities.

We strive to apply the principles of "industrial symbiosis" on a small scale, whereby the by-products of a production process are used as an input for another and resources are pooled. We aim to put all arboricultural arisings entering our site to positive use, either for us or for other social enterprises and community groups. We seek to collaborate with and support various projects working towards positive social change, such as food growing projects, recycling initiatives and mental health art charities. We also want to contribute to the public's education regarding issues we care about, such as carbon footprint and environmental impact reduction. We have a standalone Community Benefit Policy which should be read for further information.

2.4. Social and economic justice

We believe in a fair and just society rooted in equality, integrity and solidarity. We aim to trade in a manner which supports a sustainable economy, in contrast to much of world trade, which is to the benefit of a minority, with consequences for people's health and lives. We seek to actively engage with issues such as climate justice, and contribute to addressing inequalities, for example by working to alleviate fuel poverty.

We believe in responsible and sound financial management, for the benefit of our employees and community investors, and to allow the ongoing delivery of the beneficial outcomes brought by our activities. We will not engage in, and will challenge wherever possible, dishonest practices such as greenwash, irresponsible marketing, corruption.

2.5. Animal welfare

We believe animals have a right to live without being subjected to cruel or painful treatments, and without being exploited or slaughtered for human profits.

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3. Ethical commitment and principles

We are firmly committed to putting our values into practice and will do this when making decisions relating to all aspects of our work, including:

- a. work methods
- b. type of work undertaken as well as direct and indirect outcomes
- c. third parties we do business with and/or support
- d. procurement
- e. relationship with our staff
- f. in-house routines

We will do so within the framework of the following principles:

Consistent Approach - We always try to contribute to positive environmental and social change and acknowledge there are several ways in which we can do this, including (i) by refusing to trade with third parties or take part in projects which we consider to breach our core values, (ii) or by engaging with third parties/projects whose ethical approach don't meet our ideal, so we can influence their practices or alleviate the effects.

Pragmatism - We recognise that there can be a large number of parameters to be taken into account when making decisions. These include ethical, environmental, financial, logistical, reputational, and trade relationships aspects. The mindmap and decision tree relating to arboricultural jobs are a good illustration of the complexity of some decisions (see section , 4.6, Appendices A and B). In some instances, some of these considerations may conflict. We are committed to addressing ethical dilemmas in a fair, discerning and far-sighted way (see Appendix C).

Realism - We recognise that (i) not every potential client/partner/supplier will share our ethical approach and that (ii) there will not always be an ethical alternative available. Furthermore, we accept that the TreeStation operates in a complex environment and not all decisions are clear-cut (see example of ethical dilemma). As a result, we will have to be broad-minded on occasions to ensure that the TreeStation can continue its work. We take a proportional approach, defined by our ideal (see section 2), the compromises we are ready to make, and the lines which we will not cross (see Appendix D).

Transparency and openness - We will communicate decisions which may appear to deviate from this policy through the newsletter and/or website and encourage feedback and discussion.

Responsibility to the Community - We will respect the interests of the local community and will aim to integrate these into our decision making process. We will also take on board feedback and suggestions from our community of shareholders and customers.

Mitigation - Where we decide to work with a third party whose ethical approach does not meet our ideal, we will try to mitigate the impact of such work (e.g. pressure a site clearance client into funding replanting, lobby a supplier into changing their sourcing policy, etc). We will on all such occasions be honest with ourselves about the likely real impact or leverage we have.

4. Implementation

We take our ethical commitment seriously and go beyond just words: our values inform our actions. The following paragraphs explain how we translate our values into actions, focusing on areas of particular importance. All our activities are also carried out within the framework of our [Environmental and Health & Safety policies](#).

4.1. Client-focused approach

- We work to the highest professional and safety standards - see our [Health & Safety policy](#) for more details
- We give extensive consideration to the satisfaction of our customer - see our [Quality policy](#) for more details
- We sell affordable and competitively priced products and services
- We offer various grades of fuel matching various budgets and desires – and we offer bespoke products and services to satisfy individual expectations and avoid uniformity.
- We hold various certifications which testify to the quality of our products, services and systems, and are working towards further relevant accreditation schemes.

4.2. Procurement, finance and trading relationships

- We will ideally aim to avoid working with/for, or to purchase from, any organisations whose practises or interests conflict with our values. This could be due to the nature of their products or services, or the nature of their working processes or interests (see Appendix D).
- We actively seek to purchase goods and services from local community enterprises and businesses with strong environmental and ethical policies and practices - e.g. printing, sourcing of IT material, office stationery, etc. By preferring locally sourced goods and services, we minimise the need for long distance transport and associated environmental impact.
- We use second-hand, recycled and environmentally-friendly plant, welfare and office equipment wherever possible. If we do have to buy new items for the offices or yard, then we seek out 'eco-labelling' and try to buy the least environmentally harmful equipment, taking both its manufacture and operation into account. When selecting replacements for our fleet / plant, fuel efficiency is a key factor in our choices.
- All finance that we generate or invest should play an ethical and environmentally positive role in the world economy.
- As a Community Benefit Society we prefer to secure financial support directly from our community, for example via community share issues rather than relying in intermediaries and financial institutions.
- We actively try to avoid borrowing money with unethical institutions.

- When we do need to trade with financial institutions, we ensure that our banking, investments, pensions and insurance are all provided by organisations that demonstrate that they use funds in environmentally positive and ethical ways. We currently bank with the Co-operative bank (*last updated February 2016*).
- Where we can, we try to influence our suppliers/partners ethical practices through our trading relationship.

4.3. Timber supply chain

- All our products are exclusively made from virgin wood.
- We will never buy imported timber.
- We maximise our use of treework and woodland management arisings from the Greater Manchester area to minimise fuel use and related carbon emissions.
- When we need to purchase timber to complement our feedstock, we always do so legally, sustainably and as locally as possible (mostly within the North West) and we take reasonable steps to ascertain its origin.
- We work with a small number of trusted hauliers of known probity.

4.4. Methods of work and operations

We recognise that the management of woodland, and the transporting and processing of woody products use a substantial amount of fossil fuel energy and that this is the main environmental non-beneficial impact of the TreeStation. We try hard to minimise this:

- Our baseline wood drying process has generally been air-drying, to keep the embedded carbon as low as possible. We also kiln some of our wood, particularly (i) sawn timber, which must be dried further to ensure suitability for indoor use and (ii) some of our firewood feedstock, to ensure high and consistent quality and to deal with the seasonality of the trade. Between half and two thirds of our firewood is kilned, always after being naturally pre-seasoned (*last reviewed February 2016*). As of January 2015, we have our own biomass fuelled kilning facilities on-site (low carbon fuel and no transport emissions).
- We also limit the area in which we do business to minimise fuel use and related carbon emissions. In practice, the vast majority of our work and clientele is within Greater Manchester. In this way we strive to minimise the amount of fossil fuels used in producing our products and believe that our woodchip, firewood and other products are produced using less fossil fuel energy per kWh or tonne than those offered by our competitors.
- We keep our lorries, tractors and other machinery well maintained and turn them off when not in use. As far as is practical, we run vehicles with full loads in both directions and use the most fuel efficient route. We generally organise our logistics so as to keep the embedded carbon as low as possible.
- We proactively maintain our machinery so as to avoid premature wear and tear and associated inefficiencies, resources use and wastage.



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- We strive to find a worthy and relevant use for all our woody by-products, and keep woody waste to zero. Currently all of our woody by-products are put to good use: e.g. low grade biomass fuel, animal bedding, mushroom cultivation, biochar production, Hugel culture, mulch, compost, etc.
- Where appropriate and feasible, we share some resources with other projects - e.g. specialist plant, space in the yard (workshop or end offices), etc.

4.5. Tendering for arboricultural, consulting and woodland management services

There are usually a large number of factors to assess and weigh up when tendering for a contract or choosing a sub-contractor. Most of the jobs the TreeStation gets approached about are ethically appropriate. However, the TreeStation is sometimes invited to bid for jobs which conflict with some of its values, particularly in relation to the type of work undertaken and/or its outcome. The attached mindmap and decision tree are guides to decision making (see Appendices A and B).

4.6. Delivery of arboricultural, consulting and woodland management services

- Our woodland management work is only done on sites on which a felling licence is in place or the appropriate licence is fully in place.
- Our arboricultural work (individual trees) is checked with the Local Authority to ensure no Tree Protection Order (TPO) are in place and the site is not within a Conservation Area (CA); if there are TPOs, or if it is within a CA, we ensure consent is gained from the appropriate authority before the work is carried out.
- We carry out our work in a safe and responsible manner, with the H&S of our employees and the public always in mind. We realise that treework is a potentially hazardous activity, and are genuine in our quest to identify, minimise and, where possible, eliminate hazards.
- Our consultancy, advice and surveys are always impartial, objective, and independent. We pride ourselves on providing environmentally-focused services which balance various factors including carbon, biodiversity, erosion, etc.
- We encourage our customers to ensure specimen and/or rare trees and other plants are retained or protected and make sure our operations do not damage them.
- Wherever possible, we use the lowest ground pressure plant and equipment we can, to minimise damage to the soil and plant life, and avoid soil erosion and runoff into local water courses.
- We use low-impact extraction techniques to extract timber from our sites where feasible.
- We aim to balance the need to source timber from local woodlands with the conservation imperatives of increasing deadwood habitats.
- We will not conduct operations that will disturb uncommon birds, animals and other species, especially during the breeding season, on which we can advise.

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- We are familiar with our legal obligations under the wildlife protection legislation, particularly as it relates to nesting birds and bats, and carry out appropriate assessments to ensure we cause no harm to these animals.

4.7. In-house routines

We believe small, day-to-day actions can have a significant impact, and we therefore manage our core activities, offices and logistics with the view to keeping our overall environmental impact as low as possible:

- Our site is non-smoking.
- The cooking kitchen and fridge are predominantly vegetarian.
- We pay attention to cyclists and their safety & offer a secure place to store bikes for staff.
- We encourage our team to use bicycles and public transport for commuting. When members of staff are working off-site we encourage direct commuting from home to site rather than via the office/yard, if that is an appropriate option.
- We only use electricity made from non-nuclear renewable sources, our provider is currently Good Energy (*last reviewed January 2016*).
- Our operations require very limited water use. Our supply is metered, which helps identify wastage and leakages.
- Lighting in the yard is via low energy LED floodlights whilst indoor lighting is by efficient fluorescent tubes / low energy light bulbs. Other electric appliances are selected for their efficiency and only used where required.
- Our office building is centrally heated from our biomass powered boiler at a comfortable temperature, in-line with government guidance on the subject. The boiler is fed by our own woodchip. The buildings are not yet double glazed, though we have improved their insulation. We plan to further upgrade our premises to the highest standards we can afford, as soon as our limited funds allow.
- We strive to use reclaimed materials and products for any refurbishment or building works and where that is not possible use products that are as environmentally friendly and locally sourced as possible. We actively seek out and buy alternatives to plastics, especially PVC.
- Timber yards can suffer from oil leaks and fuel spills from vehicles and plant. We take great care to minimise these, clean them up as soon as they happen and so prevent any harmful pollutants entering the drainage system.
- Consumables and refreshments are local and organic, as far as practical. If local produce is not available we will prefer to buy FairTrade products.
- We do not support the use of biofuels (including biodiesel) produced from cleared forests or agricultural land, but where possible we will use biodiesel made from recycled waste oils.

4.8. Human resources and management

- We pay our staff a fair wage and everyone is paid at least the UK Real Living Wage (*last reviewed Jan 2025*).

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- We have a pay structure which allows for a ratio of no more than 1:2.5 between the lowest and highest pay rates.
- We aim to support our staff in their professional development and aspirations by providing adequate training and learning opportunities, wherever reasonably possible.
- We contribute to our employees' well-being by providing flexible and reliable employment, wherever reasonably possible.
- We aim to provide safe and hygienic working conditions, and aim to provide an example of best practice within our industry.

4.9. Waste management

- We reduce waste through effective resource purchasing and avoidance of excess packaging.
- The office and workshops waste is thoroughly segregated, re-used wherever possible, and recycled. Only a very small proportion which cannot be recycled is disposed in landfill.
- We avoid the use of disposable products where a reusable alternative is available.
- We will not replace computers and other electronic equipment when existing machines can be upgraded.

4.10. Responsible marketing

Our marketing strategy and its implementation are based on ethical marketing practices:

- We don't use greenwash or misleading publicity.
- We don't try to create a need where it doesn't exist, but rather to provide an ethical option to fulfil an existing need.
- Whenever one of our products exceptionally differs from our standard specifications (including production process) for some reason, we are open and straightforward about it.
- We aim to sell our products and services on the local market only - in practice, the vast majority of our work and clientele is within Greater Manchester.
- We are vigilant to avoid being used for the purpose of greenwashing by other companies we may work with.

4.11. Governance

- The TreeStation is registered as a Society for the Benefit of the Community which allows our employees, customers, and community to hold a share in the business and to be a member.
- The members collectively own and control the TreeStation and have the right to elect the Board, to stand for election as Directors and to receive the annual accounts, making it a democratic and accountable organisation.
- All members have one vote, regardless of the number of shares they hold. The principle is sacrosanct – everyone has an equal say.

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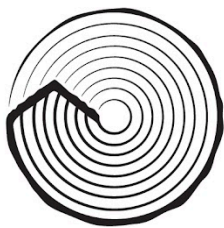


4.12. Financial accountability

- We manage our funds in a responsible, accountable and transparent manner.
- We are a not-for-profit organisation. Any financial surplus generated is re-invested in developing the TreeStation or used to support like-minded projects and initiatives.
- Our governance model, external audits, and financial transparency safeguards the TreeStation against collusion, corruption and fraud.

4.13. Cooperation, solidarity and community

- We have developed and implement a [Community Benefit Strategy](#).
- We offer second-grade woodfuel and kindling at lower cost, to help tackle fuel poverty. As our circumstances allow, we will endeavour to support the less well off to improve their heating conditions.
- We are working to ensure the longevity of traditional wood industries, enhancing the sustainable management of UK woodlands and supporting emerging new technologies that are environmentally beneficial.
- We are grateful for the support received from other organisations and aim to reciprocate through trading and other means.
- We will support small and local businesses where possible by preferentially trading with them.
- We collaborate on an ongoing basis with various projects working towards positive social change, such as food growing projects, recycling initiatives and mental health art charities. We aim to expand this type of mutual assistance in the future to increase our positive impact.
- We believe in sharing of resources, so we host several symbiotic projects on our site, such as a freelance coppicer, organic mushroom grower and joiner.
- We want to contribute to the public's education regarding issues we care about. We do so by hosting or taking part to public events raising the profile and understanding of sustainability in Greater Manchester.
- Where the TreeStation financial situation allows, we will invest, lend or donate the financial surpluses to projects or initiatives promoting values similar to ours. We also support such projects in non-financial ways.

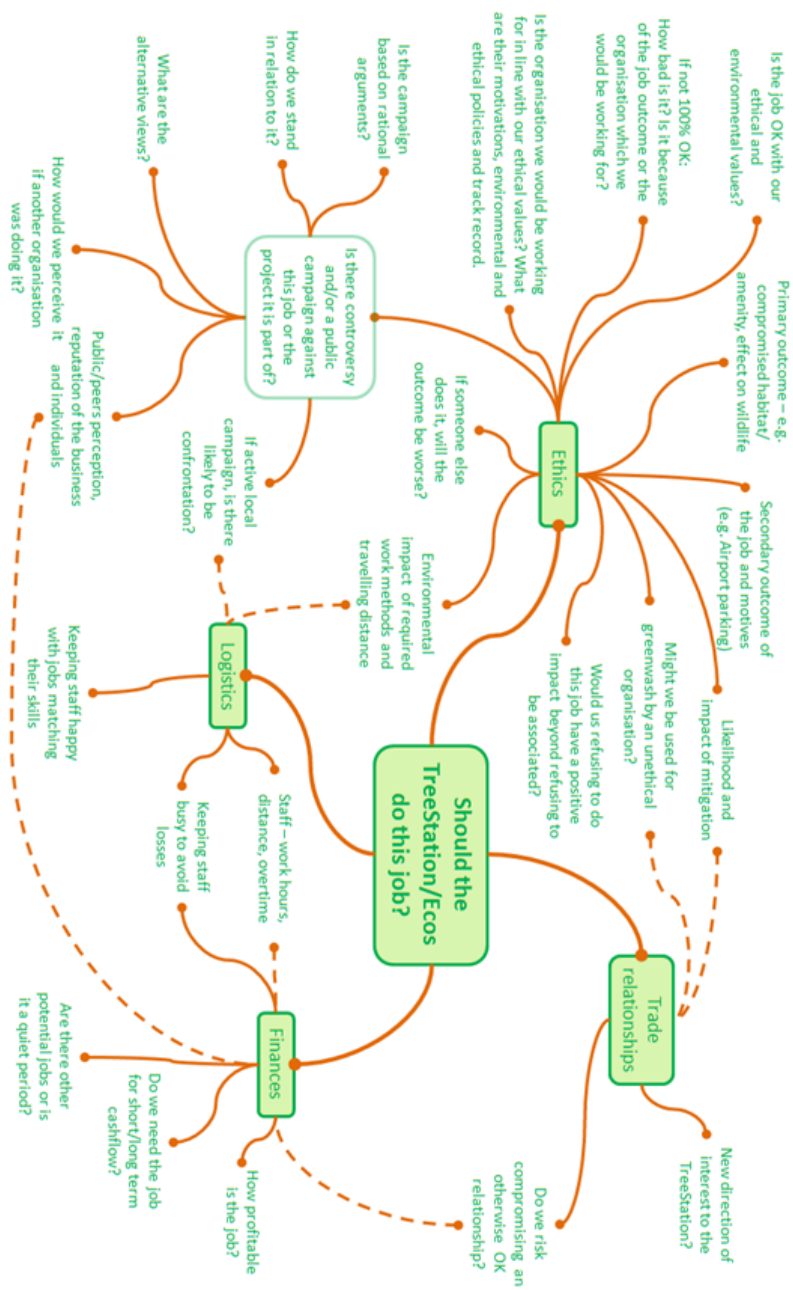


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Appendix A: Arboricultural services mindmap

NB- This is for illustrative purposes only and cannot be regarded as comprehensive and applicable to all circumstances.



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Appendix B: Arboricultural services decision tree

[illegible]

Appendix C: Examples of ethical dilemmas

These are examples of dilemmas the TreeStation has or could face, alongside some of the arguments we have/would need to consider.

Dilemma	Pros	Cons
Should we use timber that was felled from a park where there was public opposition?	- We could make the best local use of a resource that has now been produced	- Reputation risk: we could be wrongly associated to the felling
Felling trees for the construction of a tram line to the airport?	- Tram and other public transport is a useful development	- Tree felling for the development of some infrastructure is never ideal - The tram line to the airport encourages aerial traffic
Felling trees for the provision of driveways in a deprived residential area, contract from a regular client normally offering us ethically acceptable contracts?	- The treework industry is highly competitive and by refusing this contract or demanding some mitigation conditions we are likely to lose this and many future jobs - The TreeStation's financial stability benefits its employees, the community and the environment - Giving the residents of such deprived areas the choice to make their own decisions about the ethics of the job	- Actively taking part in what we see as an unethical outcome (e.g. promoting the car culture and associated pollution, climate change and health issues)
Doing an ethically acceptable job for a non-ethical client? (e.g. woodland management for an unethical bank/insurance company or for hunting; selling chip to company whose international subsidiary is complicit in developing illegal settlements in Palestine; treework for a pharmacology company which tests on animals or sells skin whitening products)	- Being in a position to re-invest unethical money into ethical projects - The TreeStation being financially stable benefits its employees, the community and the environment	- Potential of being used for greenwash - Being complicit with the 3rd party unethical acts
Using petrol-powered blowers for tidying a site at the end of a job?	Effective and efficient. Human-powered tools are more environmentally friendly but would mean our treework would cost more and so not be competitive	- Noisy - Petrol powered
Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) include boots made of leather	- Resilient and protective PPE	- Animal exploitation and slaughter

Appendix D: Third party activities of concern

Based on our values, we have produced a (non-exhaustive) list of the types of organisations we *ideally* seek to avoid working with. This includes organisations, businesses and projects involved in, linked to or directly profiteering from:

- unsustainable harvest or exploitation of natural resources (e.g. fossil fuel industry) including deforestation and illegal logging
- industries recognised as intensive contributors to climate change or directly profiteering from climate change outcomes
- “extreme energies”, including nuclear energy, shale gas (fracking), tar sands
- destruction of ecosystems
- unsustainable/socially damaging biofuels
- greenwash
- genetic engineering
- geo-engineering
- the arms trade
- resource wars
- breaches of human rights, dictatorial regimes, landgrabs
- breaches of fundamental labour rights, exploitation, forced or child labour
- irresponsible health, marketing or research practices, including tobacco products, breastmilk substitutes, vivisection, animal testing
- discrimination or inciting to hatred including but not limited to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, classism
- corruption, bribery, unethical and dishonest practises
- encouraging mass consumerism (e.g. large supermarkets)
- animal slaughter, intensive animal farming, fur farming, blood sports
- prison industry and asylum seekers detention centres
- illegal settlements
- environmentally hazardous substances
- corruption, tax evasion, fraud or other dishonest behaviour
- gambling

We will also consider very carefully working with organisations which are the target of known boycotts, including from the BDS ([Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions](#)) recommendations.

As explained in section 3, we will not always be in a position to stick to our ideals. A very basic example is that although we ideally don’t want to trade with companies profiteering from the extraction and production of fossil fuels, we need diesel to run our machines.