

# Corporate social responsibility

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# Howdens – worthwhile for all concerned



At the heart of every house is the kitchen. Big or small, it's a welcoming space to meet morning or night to relax or busily prepare food and entertain family and friends. No longer simply used for cooking, the kitchen is now capable of housing anything from morning coffee with friends, to a weekend dinner party.

At the heart of our business is a commitment to creating first class kitchens and joinery and in doing so to help everyone we work with, in every community, to do well.

## SO HOW DO WE DO THIS?

As a Board we ensure that value creation benefits broader society and is well understood. We note the new government's response has been to reinvigorate industrial strategy and challenge companies to reconnect and to ensure all interests are aligned. This includes adopting values that provide the foundation for a corporate culture that respects its responsibilities to all stakeholders, including society.

For 21 years, we have been growing a sustainable business that delivers value for shareholders, employees, builders and communities. We live, breathe and dream our values and are in tune with the societies where we operate. We always act responsibly. Our approach to sustainability helps us to maximise long-term value socially, environmentally and financially. And we continue to do this day in day out.

Howdens now employs 8,900 people across 642 depots, two factories, our warehouse and distribution operation and our IT and support functions. We supply around 50 kitchen ranges as well as appliances and joinery items to 400,000 small builders across Great Britain and with a small number of sites in Europe. We are continuing to invest in this market that demands more choices, better quality, better availability, better planning and better service.

And we are investing in the people that are helping us to grow. These are the people who work in our factories; who work in our depots; who work in our distribution network. We work for the small builder across the country to ensure that they have the right product at the right price at the right time for their customer.

We are part of the local community. We have made over £2.5 million of donations, and we work with a wide range of charities on a local, national and international basis.

We are a long-term business with considerable opportunity for growth and we continuously assess how we can operate more effectively and sustainably; where we can make the difference. In the next pages you will find lots of stories and examples both big and small or how Howdens ensures that it is worthwhile for all concerned.

**Matthew Ingle**  
Chief Executive Officer

22 February 2017



## THE VALUE CREATED BY HOWDENS IN 2016

**8,900**

full-time jobs with prospects in UK manufacturing, in our local trade depots and in distribution, systems and support

**300**

apprentices currently in training  
Over 250 apprentices completed their training in 2016

**£350m**

of wages, salaries and benefits paid to employees

**£290m**

of tax generated

Corporation Tax, NI, PAYE, and VAT

**£220m**  
of working capital extended to  
**400,000**

small businesses in our peak trading period

No fees, up to 8 weeks to pay

Responsible for all or part of the pensions of over  
**17,000** people

£270m contributed to pension funding since 2012

Over **£590m**

spent with suppliers of goods and services

100% of kitchen cabinets manufactured by us in the UK



**£63m**

of capital investment in the year  
Investing in UK manufacturing, and expanding our depot network

**£145m**

paid out to shareholders in dividends and buybacks

100% of UK employees in share ownership schemes

Significant support for a sustainable UK forestry industry

**225,000m<sup>3</sup>**

of chipboard from managed forests in the UK

Timber Trade Federation-certified responsible purchaser

**98%**

of manufacturing waste recycled or reused

12,000 tonnes of sawdust converted to energy to heat our factories

165,000 pallets recovered or repaired

**12th**

anniversary of partnership with Leonard Cheshire Disability

Doubling our donations in 2016

Supporting young, disabled adults to find valuable roles within their communities

Over **3,700**

other donations, £1.5m given to local charities and community activities

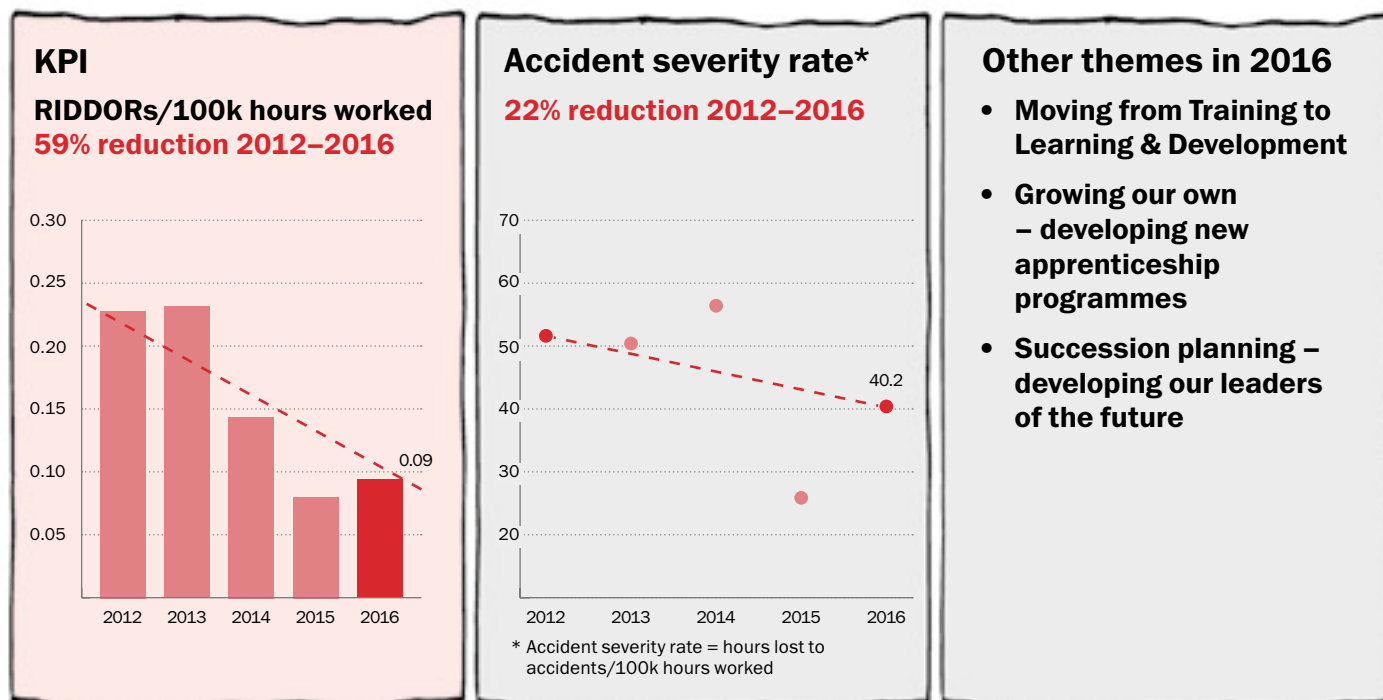
Over **£55m**

of rent paid to around 600 commercial landlords



# Our people

## Keeping them safe, offering them rewarding careers, developing their potential



### Keeping our people safe

#### Continued efforts, focusing on risk and behaviours, sharing best practice

We've got 8,900 employees, and we need to keep them all safe at work. Accidents have remained very low this year because we've continued to invest in safe processes and safe plant and machinery.

But having robust processes can only take us so far. So this year, we've turned our attention to changing behaviours and mind sets. We're also working with other companies and consultants to help us benchmark and challenge ourselves. We hope that these actions will improve our safety record even further.

We have brought safety teams from the trade division and the supply division together to share best practice and work on common risk areas. One example of this is a short film that we produced this year, highlighting our procedures for unloading at depots. Responsibility for safety when unloading is shared between the lorry driver making the delivery and the depot staff receiving and unloading the goods. Making a film with employees from both divisions allowed us to give a consistent message across the business.

#### Other highlights include:

- £1m bespoke forklift truck failsafe loading alert system rolled out across all depots.
- Development of bespoke safety management software which provides a single place for recording and tracking any incidents across the whole depot network.
- Retaining our ISO 18001 safety accreditation at all factories and warehouses.

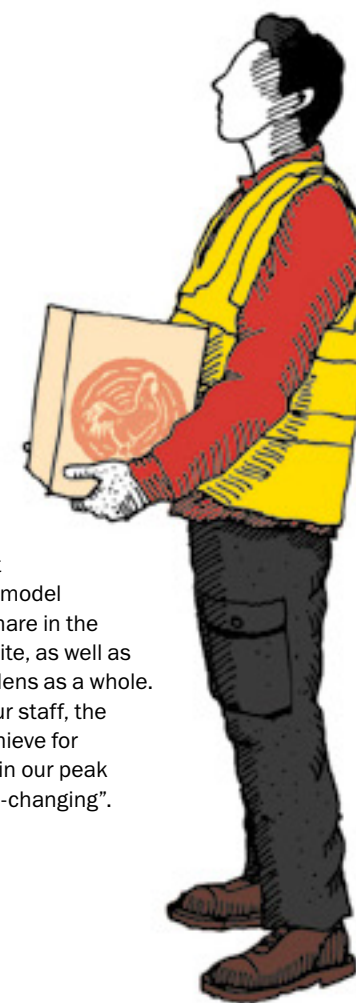
### Offering rewarding careers

#### Good basic salary, substantial bonus opportunity

We pay a good basic salary. We evaluate all our job roles against a consistent scale across each division. We use a scale based on the skills required for each role, and we set our salaries according to those skills. This is transparent and objective, and helps our people to know that we are treating them equally and paying them according to their skills. All of our pay rates are above the living wage, and most of them are well above it. We also offer a range of both core and opt-in benefits to suit our employees' lifestyles.

We offer all of our people the opportunity to be part of a pension scheme which we contribute to. In 2016 we paid £53.4m into our pension schemes for the benefit of our 17,000 members, which include both current and former employees. We also offer free shares to all our people who stay with the company for at least three years, so that they can share in our growth.

We give staff the opportunity to get substantial bonuses for exceptional performance. This has always been part of the Howdens business model and culture. Our people share in the profitability of their local site, as well as in the profitability of Howdens as a whole. In the words of some of our staff, the bonuses that they can achieve for exceptional performance in our peak trading period can be "life-changing".



### Developing potential

#### Moving from training to learning & development, identifying tomorrow's leaders to grow with the business, developing new apprenticeships

We've completed our transformation beyond simply training for current job roles to developing for the future. Our business benefits from the investment we make in developing our people. When we invest in the right people we can grow our own leaders. Leaders who already understand the strategic importance of the Howdens business model and culture. Our investment in development also gives valuable opportunities to our best people and helps us to retain them.

We will need more leaders at every level as we implement our strategy to expand the depot network. We're using a consistent approach across the business to identify people with the potential to step up. Then we're supporting them with a tailored development framework to get them ready for their next career step before they actually take that step. This means that they can hit the ground running, with the confidence to perform at a high standard and to deliver the Howdens values and service to our customers.

We are also continuing to develop our apprenticeship programmes throughout the business, offering a range of worthwhile futures to young people across the country.

We have almost 300 apprentices currently training. In our Supply division, some of them are apprenticed in engineering, some are apprenticed to become multi-skilled machine operators, and some are apprenticed in our logistics operation and are learning to become our next generation of truck drivers.

In our Trade division we have apprentices working in a variety of roles across the depot network. 2016 has been the first year of our Howdens-specific three-year apprenticeship programme. During their first year, apprentices gain a nationally-recognised qualification and they also get experience of each main role in a depot, such as counter sales, business development, and kitchen design. In the second and third years, they decide to specialise in one role and they continue their development through specific courses relevant to that role.

See some of the stories that our people have to tell about their career development with Howdens at: <https://careers.howdens.com/our-people>.

# Our customers

## Sustainable product, safety and traceability, supporting our customers

### KPI

#### % energy reduction on best-selling Lamona fridge-freezers

In 2013 we set ourselves the target to reduce the energy consumption of our best-selling Lamona fridge-freezers by 5% in the three years to 2016. We haven't been able to meet the 5% target by the end of 2016, although we expect to beat the target in 2017.

We have been working with our suppliers to achieve further reductions in 2016, and we look forward to launching new A++ rated fridge-freezers in 2017, which will give a 10% reduction in energy consumption over 2013 levels.

### Other themes in 2016

- **Energy-efficient new products**
- **Increased efforts to trace product to end-users**
- **Supporting the builder and the builder's customer**

### Sustainable product

#### Energy efficiency, durability and quality

Our appliances are made by third party suppliers to our specifications. We have always worked in partnership with our suppliers to improve the energy performance of our appliances, and each year this brings improvements in different product categories. Highlights in 2016 are:

- all our Lamona dishwashers now have an A+ energy rating. This means that we can now offer our customers a dishwasher which is 11% more energy-efficient
- we have introduced more efficient motors into three of our extractors, offering energy savings of up to 36%
- we have developed our first A+ rated single oven, which offers an 8% energy saving over our previous best offer

Our end-users' demands are changing all the time and we need to make sure that our builder-customers can offer a Howdens product to meet those demands. People want the highest levels of quality, safety and design, and the lowest energy consumption, at the best price. We have a rolling development programme with our main appliance suppliers where we look forward three to five years to develop our products for the future. Together, we are planning tomorrow's energy savings today.

Offering our customers no-call-back quality kitchen and joinery is part of our mission statement. We manufacture all of our cabinets ourselves, which means that we have direct control of their quality and can be confident in offering a 25 year guarantee on them.

We test the durability of our manufactured products by subjecting them to a range of tests intended to represent the challenges of a real kitchen. For example, we test the durability of their surfaces by covering them with everyday household products, from bleach and other cleaning products, to curry powder and red wine. We "slam test" doors and drawers up to 10,000 times, we put excessive weights on hinged cabinet doors to represent the action of someone using the door to pull themselves up from floor level, and we put half-tonne weights on the shelves of our tall cabinets to represent a fully laden fridge freezer.

Our suppliers test all of our Lamona appliances in their own laboratories. Their testing is accredited by independent third parties, so we already know that these products pass all the required safety directives. In addition we test all Lamona products in an independent test facility. This gives us extra assurance as well as simulating four years usage in a home environment. We also put our kitchens and appliances into Liverpool John Moores University teaching kitchens where students put them through their paces every day and give us direct feedback on their performance.

### Safety and traceability

#### Safety by design, scanning and registering products

We design safety features into the products we make ourselves, and we carefully select bought-in product from reputable sources and then we carry out additional safety testing before we sell it to our customers.

As an example of safe bought-in product, our Lamona tumble dryers have always been designed so that the heating element and the main airflow are separated. This is to prevent excess fluff coming into contact with the heating element and potentially catching fire.

It's important to us to do as much as we can to trace the ownership of our appliances, in case we ever have a product recall. We have installed scanners at all of our depots, so that we have a record of which items have been sold to which builder-customer. We're also working hard to encourage the domestic end-user to register their products so that we can support them if the need ever arises.

In 2016 we have:

- included links to the "Register my appliance" website on our own website and in the document pack that comes with the appliance
- put a sticker on the instruction manual for each appliance with the unique serial number of that appliance, so that it's easier for end users to register them
- briefed depot staff on the importance of encouraging product registration and put reminders and information in our product catalogues

We're also working with the UK trade association for domestic appliance manufacturers to see what else we can do to encourage end-users to register their appliances.

### Supporting our customers

#### Supporting the builder, supporting the builder's customer

Our business model is designed to have the greatest positive impact on our customers' businesses. Around 400,000 small builders have trade accounts with us, and we offer each of those businesses the same high levels of service and support.

Small builders are typically managing more than one project at the same time. They may have to change priorities and reschedule work at short notice because their customers need them to. Managing that complexity can be a headache, but our unique business model is developed to support them.

Because we have invested in being an in-stock business, a builder can come into the depot and take away a complete kitchen to start work that same day if they need to. We can also offer delivery onsite at a time to suit the builder's schedule. Time is money, and we have spent our money to give the builder more time. Being in stock also allows us to swap product if the end-user changes their mind.

We support the builder's business by offering them trade accounts with nett monthly payment terms. This means that the builder can be paid for the completed job before they need to pay us. During our peak trading period in 2016 we made £220m of working capital available to our customers in this way.

We also offer a high level of support to the builder's customer, the end-user. Firstly, we invest in offering a wide selection of different kitchen ranges. We offer different styles, colours and price points, so that the builder can offer their customer choice and personalisation.

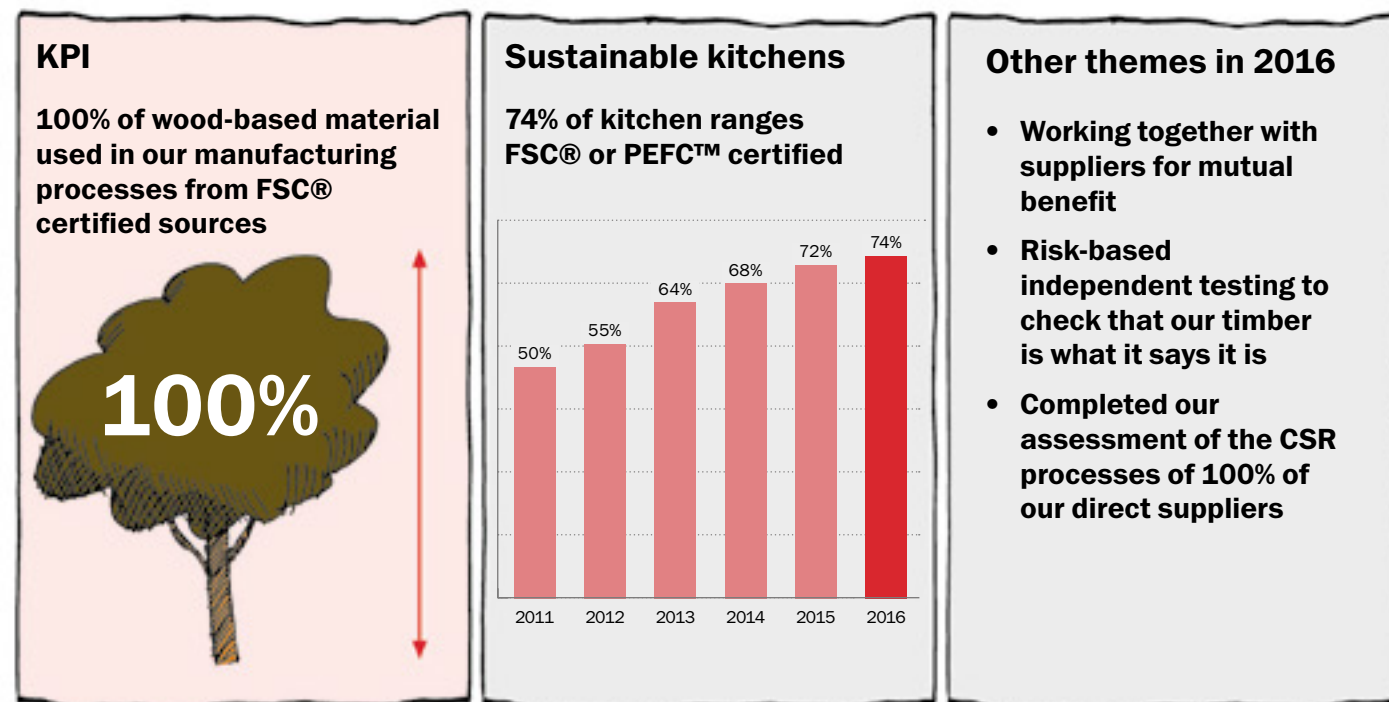
Secondly, we offer specialised support in planning the ideal kitchen. Our designers will go out to the end-user's home, for free and at a time which suits them, to measure the space and discuss options. We will then produce state of the art 3D kitchen design plans that the end-user can view at their leisure and discuss with their builder, friends and family.

We also stand by our products once the builder has installed them. Our aftersales service will work directly with the builder's customer to resolve any questions. An end-user can phone our helpline or can go into their local depot. We can send locally-based engineers to deal with any appliance issues quickly and efficiently.



# Our suppliers

## Sustainable sourcing, long-term relationships, active monitoring



### Sustainable sourcing

#### Timber management and chain of custody, shared values throughout the supply chain

Over 75% of our products are wood or wood-based, and we're responsible for making sure that it is legally harvested and comes from sustainable sources.

In 2016 we used 225,000 cubic metres of chipboard and 33,000 cubic metres of MDF in our factories. All of this came from FSC® (the Forest Stewardship Council®) certified sources and all of the products that we manufacture ourselves hold the FSC chain of custody certification (license code FSC-C019676). This means that the wood comes from responsibly managed forests and that we have independent documented evidence of an unbroken chain of ownership all the way from the forest to us, via the mill, the importer, and our suppliers.

74% of our total timber products are from certified sources (FSC or PEFC™ – the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) with 100% of our internally manufactured timber products made from FSC certified materials. We have been approved by the Timber Trade Federation as having an environmental due diligence system in place which complies with their Responsible Purchasing Policy.

We aim to source our bought-in products to the same standards as the products we manufacture ourselves. One of the metrics we use to monitor our progress in this area is the percentage of kitchen ranges which are entirely FSC-compliant. A typical kitchen range will consist of a combination of items which we have manufactured ourselves and other items which we have bought in. A range is only entirely FSC-compliant if every individual component in that range is FSC certified. At the end of 2016, 74% of our kitchen ranges met this standard, which is an increase of 24% since 2011.

We only want to work with suppliers who share our ethical values. We are clear about our expectations and our standards and our aim is that they run through our whole supply chain. Every year we gather our main suppliers together at a conference to talk about the issues that affect us and them. As well as talking to them about product development, we use this as an opportunity to repeat and reinforce our expectations for sustainability and ethical behaviour. We tell them what we need from them and we work together to come up with solutions.

### Long-term relationships

#### Worthwhile for all, built on respect, securing supply

As a purchaser of goods and services, we have a big impact on the livelihoods of our supplier network. We recognise that our relationships across the business need to be worthwhile for all concerned, and this includes our suppliers. We look to develop long-term relationships with our suppliers which are built on mutual respect and which allow us all to develop our businesses and prosper together. We work with our suppliers to set an agenda for the next few years. This might involve projects to improve quality, reliability and cost of production, or it might be developing and testing new products. In all cases, these projects will only work in the long-term if they bring benefits to both parties.

Over the last five years, two of our collaborations with suppliers have resulted in us jointly winning the prestigious British Woodworking Federation product innovation award for developing groundbreaking new door technologies that we hope will benefit both us and our suppliers for years to come.

The first example was the project behind our unique Burford door. This involved a significant financial investment from our supplier in order to develop new tooling. It also required mutual trust and

respect as we worked together to solve problems and come up with a door technology which is unique to Howdens, sells at a premium price, and is still in our product range five years after its development.

A second example was the award-winning work we have done with another of our suppliers in 2016 to develop the technology to produce a quick-fit internal door. This is a door which allows the builder to adjust the width of the door without needing to trim it, thus saving him time. We trialled this door in some of our depots in 2016 and have already extended the trial in 2017 due to high demand.

We also work with our suppliers with the aim of securing our future supply. As an example, our packaging supplier set up a factory next to our Runcorn site which provides us with just-in-time deliveries at 30 minutes' notice. They were able to make this investment in their own business because we had committed to a long-term supply agreement with them. This benefits the supplier, benefits our shareholders, and benefits the environment as it reduces transport miles.

### Active monitoring

#### Supplier assessments, training our people, risk-based testing

We take care to select suppliers with high ethical standards and we make it clear that we expect them to uphold those standards. We require them to confirm that they are operating ethically, and we gather evidence to support what they say.

We have a self-assessment process for our suppliers which includes assessing their corporate and social responsibility practices. As part of this we ask them how they manage areas such as health and safety, the environment, sustainability, ethical sourcing and product compliance. They have to provide evidence to substantiate their answers and we have a dedicated compliance team who validate the answers and the evidence. In 2016 we have validated all of our 180 direct manufacturing suppliers.

Our own people have a personal responsibility to understand and demonstrate best practice and integrity, so we've given them training to support them in their dealings with suppliers. During 2016 all of our buyers and our compliance team have taken the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply's Ethical Procurement & Supply training. This training is designed to give

them an understanding of the fundamentals of ethical behaviour when selecting and managing suppliers. At the end of the training they had to pass a comprehensive assessment as well as making a personal commitment to upholding the CIPS Code of Conduct.

Our due diligence systems rely on suppliers accurately declaring what types of wood are being used and where that wood comes from. To give us extra assurance, we carry out additional checks. We select samples of wood and send them for independent microscopy testing at a leading independent research institute. This analysis can prove what type of wood it is. We are currently evaluating the use of an emerging technology which, when it is developed and ready for use, could tell us both the species of wood and also where in the world it comes from.

There is more information about the work we do to safeguard against human rights violations in both our own business and our supply chain in our modern slavery statement at <http://www.howdenjoinerygroupplc.com/responsibilities/modern-slavery-statement.asp>

# Our environment

## Reducing waste, responsible operations, lowering emissions



### Reducing waste

#### Minimising production waste, reuse/recycle, reducing amounts to landfill

As part of our investment to replace and upgrade the machinery in our factories, we've been able to reduce waste by improving the efficiency of the way we cut chipboard. We have invested in software that allows us to take the actual production demand for different-sized panels and to make sure that we get the most panels out of each sheet of chipboard. We've taken what we learnt from this and have worked with our chipboard supplier to look for additional benefits. The result of this is that our supplier now makes a new size of chipboard sheet for us. This allows us to reduce our waste as well as allowing our supplier to make more efficient use of their own machines. Our factories already operate at high levels of efficiency, but this change has allowed us to reduce waste from cutting patterns by a further 2%.

Nevertheless, we still generate a lot of sawdust waste. At both of our factories, we have highly efficient biomass boilers which burn this waste to generate energy to heat the factories. They allow us to reuse waste, they reduce our emissions and they save us the cost of the equivalent bought-in fuel. In 2016, we converted around 12,000 tonnes of sawdust into energy at our Howden and Runcorn sites. This is enough sawdust to fill 15 Olympic swimming pools. Burning it onsite means that it doesn't have to go to landfill and it doesn't have to be transported elsewhere to be reused. We generated approximately 42,000 MWh of energy from our biomass boilers, equivalent to the average annual electricity consumption of over 10,000 households.

Nine years ago, we started repairing broken pallets rather than scrapping them. In 2016 we repaired over 165,000 pallets and put them back into use, reducing waste and saving money.

### Responsible operations

#### Energy-efficient facilities, efficient transport

All our factories, warehouses and transport sites meet the ISO 14001 standard for Environmental Management. This assures us that we have good environmental management processes in place. It also encourages us to look for further improvements in areas such as sustainable energy, waste and material management.

We have invested in a number of energy-saving projects at our factories in 2016. The most significant of these involved replacing old lighting and compressor technology with modern energy-efficient versions. These initiatives should give us a total energy saving of 2,500 MWh per year.

2016 saw us begin to use our new 650,000 sq ft warehouse at Raunds, near Northampton. Since we were involved in the design and construction of this warehouse from scratch, we were able to specify various energy-efficiency measures such as:

- efficient door seals to reduce the use of heating and cooling systems
- a solar thermal system which will reduce our need to use additional heating
- LED lighting and skylights

We were very pleased that the site received a "Very Good" rating on the BREEAM sustainability scale, putting it in the top 25% of buildings of its type.

Our truck fleet drives over 14 million miles per year, so it's very important to us that it runs efficiently and safely. We upgraded our core truck fleet to meet the latest Euro 6 emissions standards in 2015, and this also helped us to improve our miles per gallon by 6%. In 2016 we have managed a further 1% improvement in mpg by concentrating on driver behaviour. We use advanced in-cab telemetry to measure and benchmark our drivers, and we reward those who perform to the highest efficiency and safety levels. We debrief our drivers regularly, and we work with any drivers who are not driving to the highest standards to help them improve.

We now use taller trailers to deliver the cabinets that we make in our Runcorn factory. Being able to get more cabinets in each delivery means that we've made an annual reduction in trailer loads equivalent to 800 standard trailers.

We try to avoid our trucks returning empty from the depots when we can, and so we contract to carry loads for other companies when this suits our schedule. This means that we contribute to a reduction in the total number of trucks on the road, as well as the associated emissions.

In 2016 we became one of the first companies to gain the Freight Transport Association's Truck Excellence accreditation. This involves an independent audit to test that we demonstrate consistently high operating and safety standards.

We have continued to reduce our carbon footprint on the majority of our inbound freight from Europe, moving it from road to rail. 93% of our European freight was transported by rail in 2016. This gave a saving of approximately 900 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> for the year, as well as a significant cost saving.

### Lowering emissions

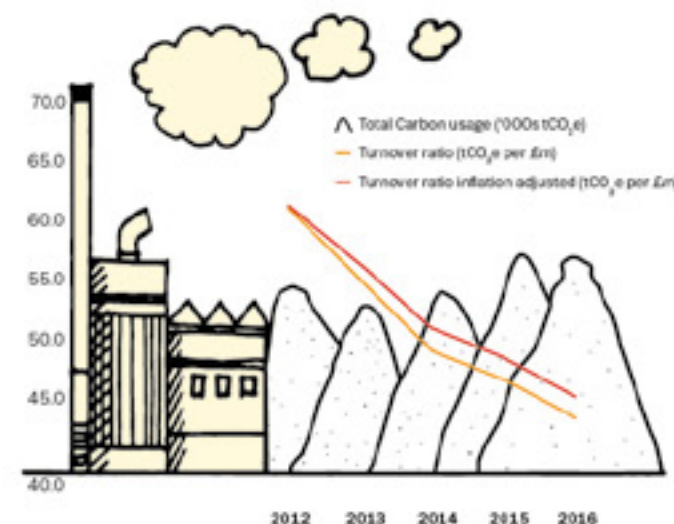
#### Efficient operations lead to reduced emissions

#### GREENHOUSE GAS AND EMISSIONS REPORTING

	Total CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions (Tonnes) 2016	Total CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions (Tonnes) 2015
Scope 1 – Direct: Gas	3,338	2,544
Scope 1 – Direct: Diesel	26,065	25,427
Scope 1 – Direct: Other fuels	1,196	1,516
<b>SCOPE 1 – DIRECT: TOTAL</b>	<b>30,599</b>	<b>29,487</b>
Scope 2 – Indirect: Electricity	28,148	29,578
<b>SCOPE 2 – INDIRECT: TOTAL</b>	<b>28,104</b>	<b>29,578</b>
<b>TOTAL (Scope 1 and 2)</b>	<b>58,747</b>	<b>59,065</b>
<b>Turnover (£m)</b>	<b>1,307.3</b>	<b>1,220.2</b>
<b>Turnover ratio (tCO<sub>2</sub>e per £m)</b>	<b>44.9</b>	<b>48.4</b>
<b>Inflation adjusted turnover ratio (tCO<sub>2</sub>e per £m)</b>	<b>47.1</b>	<b>50.4</b>

We are pleased to report that our total emissions have reduced in 2016 despite an increase in turnover.

Turnover increased by 7% in 2016, and both the turnover ratio and the inflation adjusted turnover ratios decreased by 7%. We will continue to look for further improvements. Our record over the past five years is shown on the chart below.





# Our communities

## Local community projects, nationwide and international projects, education and scholarships

### Local community projects

#### Local involvement on a nationwide basis, thousands of donations, £1.5m contributed

Every Howdens depot, manufacturing site, distribution and support centre, has an important role in the life of its local community. Each of our sites depends on its local community for its success and growth; for its customers and its staff. Our culture is based on personal relationships and individual accountability, and we encourage our people to support and engage with local community activities and charities.

We make our products, time and cash available for staff at local sites to get involved in their communities in all sorts of ways. This year we have donated 61 kitchens and paid for them to be fitted. Typical cash donations may be just a few hundred pounds, but they will make a big difference. They might cover things like:

- buying new kit for a local children's sports team
- supporting the work of a community centre

- giving our staff's time and materials to help renovate facilities at a care home
- providing assistance to a local school or college
- donating cash to a local hospital's appeal for vital equipment

In 2016, we've made 3,700 separate donations which have involved us giving cash or products worth £1.5m. In addition to that, we also donated £150,000 of cash and stock to communities affected by flooding.

Our culture of being involved in the local community and of giving back to that community also shows in the actions our people take as individuals. Every year, all across the country, we support individuals and teams of our people as they give up their time and put themselves to the test to raise money for all sorts of local and national charities.

### Nationwide and international projects

#### Leonard Cheshire Disability: increased commitment, starting involvement with international projects

We've had a successful partnership with Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD) since 2004 and we're pleased to say that it continues to grow. In 2016 we have doubled our commitment to LCD and have donated cash and goods worth £0.8m.

LCD works for a society where everyone is equally valued, and supports people with all types of disabilities, all over the world. Like Howdens, LCD values local relationships, and their work supports disabled people to be active members of their local communities. They support disabled people to live in their own homes and in residential care, as well as providing skills and employment programmes to help disabled people into work. Internationally, in over 50 countries worldwide, LCD helps disabled children into primary school, and supports disabled adults into jobs.

Our work with LCD is in three main areas:

- designing and fitting inclusive kitchens in their care homes and day centres so disabled people can live more independently
- helping young disabled people play an active role in their communities through sponsorship of the "Can Do" volunteering programme
- working with LCD's international network on overseas projects

Howdens are experts in designing inclusive kitchens for disabled people or those with limited mobility, and all of our ranges are available with a variety of inclusive features. We have pledged to supply and fit inclusive kitchens from our range wherever they are needed in any of LCD's homes across the country. We take on projects as prioritised by LCD and when convenient for each home. This year's demand meant that we planned, donated and fitted 27 kitchens. Some of these are specific training kitchens, used to pass on cooking skills which help people increase their ability to live independently.

Just over four years ago we began to support LCD's Can Do programme. Can Do gives young disabled adults the chance to develop important life and work skills, and boost their self-confidence. It does this by supporting them to devise and take part in a range of volunteering projects in their local community. It gives them individual mentoring, group support and a social network, as well as an opportunity to gain further qualifications. Howdens support has helped Can Do expand from four locations when we began our involvement to 19 locations in 2016, supporting more than 6,000 young disabled people through meaningful volunteering opportunities in their local community.

Can Do aims to build young people's confidence, so that they can get out and about on their own, cook their own meals, build their support and friendship networks, and where possible get them ready for the world of work. In 2016, Can Do participants in London swapped skills with employers, providing them with training on disability equality in the workplace, in exchange for support with CV writing. As a result of taking part in Can Do, 79% of participants felt more independent and able to do tasks and activities on their own, and 87% of them believe their employability and skills improved.

Howdens has a global reach through our supply chain, and so in 2016 we began to support LCD's global network. We are currently supporting two projects in South East Asia. One of them aims to equip 5,000 disabled adults with the training and skills needed to find employment or to start their own business. The other project aims to support 300 disabled women by promoting their human rights, preventing violence and supporting them into employment.

There are more details of our involvement with LCD online at [www.howdens.com/about-us/leonard-cheshire-disability/](http://www.howdens.com/about-us/leonard-cheshire-disability/) and more information about LCD at <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/>.

### Education and scholarships

#### QEST educational scholarships, E-ACT academies

QEST is the charitable arm of the Royal Warrant Holders' Association. They grant apprenticeships and scholarships in traditional and contemporary crafts, making a vital contribution to the British craft industry. We started to work with them in 2015. Our donations so far have funded one scholar in furniture making and design, and we look forward to sponsoring another scholar in 2017. There is more information about QEST at [www.qest.org.uk/about-qest/](http://www.qest.org.uk/about-qest/)

Howdens also work with E-ACT, a leading independent academy sponsor, responsible for managing, maintaining and developing 24 academies. We are part way through a three-year commitment to provide £20,000 per year to assist with developing community engagement. We offer them practical support in the shape of providing expert volunteer help with their governance, and we also promote our apprenticeship programmes to E-ACT students where appropriate.

### Case Study: Retained firefighters and emergency first responders



Our people are making a real difference in their local community, and are helping to save lives. Our factory in Howden, Yorkshire, is on the edge of a small rural town. The local fire station is unmanned and relies on retained firefighters. These are people who typically have other jobs or responsibilities, but when the call comes they drop whatever they are doing and respond.

Six years ago we started working with the local Fire and Rescue Service and we currently have three employees who are trained members of the retained firefighter team at the Howden fire station. That station sent teams to over 200 incidents in 2016, including house fires, vehicle fires, industrial fires and incidents in which people were trapped in burning buildings. 80% of those calls had at least one of our people on the responding team and on most calls our people made up at least half of the team. In recognition of this, one of our employees was given the 2016 Chief Fire Officer's Award. This award is only given to one person in a year, and it was presented in recognition for building a strong relationship between Howdens and the Humberside Fire & Rescue Service. In the words of the Chief Officer, that

relationship has been instrumental in keeping crewing levels high and keeping two vehicles on the run during the day as well as on evenings and at weekends.

We also have some employees who are trained as first responders and who support the local ambulance service. These people are called out to give essential advanced first aid in the case of, say, a heart attack or stroke. They give vital initial care until an ambulance can get to the scene. This sort of care can be critical in determining the outcome of an emergency, especially in more rural areas where ambulances have to come from further away. According to the local Fire and Rescue Service, the team which our employees are part of has saved at least a dozen lives in the last year.

Around two years ago, we started to do the same thing at our Runcorn factory and we now have a retained firefighter team there. In the future we hope to extend this and have a team based at our main warehouse in Northamptonshire.