A climate ranking of the eleven largest UK opticians chains

Edward Lander looks at carbon reporting practices and explains how Vision Express lost its best in sector climate ranking after a takeover by the world's biggest optician

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Ethical Consumer launched its new carbon management and reporting rating system in 2020 to encourage corporations to make changes to their climate change policies by showing them how their environmental measures compare with industry rivals. The research also guides consumers in their own choices.

In February 2022 we investigated the steps UK opticians were taking in to address the climate emergency as part of our wider Carbon Ranking Research Project.

The research analysed whether eleven companies disclosed emissions at all stages of the production and transportation process.

We also looked for evidence that companies had introduced climate policies to minimise emissions from buildings, optimise transportation, and utilise green electricity and sustainable materials.

We found encouraging initiatives to offer sustainable products and recycle old contact lenses at even some of the worst ranking opticians in our list. However, we thought that these would have a limited impact on the industry's carbon footprint.

Our Ranking

Our carbon rating system looks for publicly available data which shows that companies:

(a) have set targets for carbon reduction in line with international agreements,
(b) are reporting annually on what their emissions actually are, and
(c) have a plausible plan for how they meet the targets, including reporting on measures they've already taken.
(d) are not involved in any particularly damaging sectors such as fossil fuels.

Each company researched received an Ethical Consumer rating of best, middle or worst for carbon management and reporting. The results are summarised in the table below.

Company	Rating	Annual income (2020)	Group income	Scope 1&2 (kt CO2e)	Scope 3 (kt CO2e)
Vision Express	Middle	£262.8m	£2.9bn*	36.75	29.64
Boots Opticians	Middle	£286.4m§	£106.7bn	1649	Criteria not met
David Clulow	Middle	Not provided	£12bn† ‡	742.8	Criteria not met
ASDA Opticians	Worst	Not provided	£20.3bn	664	Criteria not met
Black & Lizars	Worst	£9.8mΔ	N/A	Income exemption	
Costco Opticians	Worst	Not provided	£124.57bn†	2663	Not provided
Duncan and Todd	Worst	£16.88m	N/A	Not provided	
Leightons	Worst	£16.6m	N/A	Not provided	
Optical Express	Worst	£80.7m	N/A	Not provided	
Scrivens	Worst	£38.4m	N/A	Not provided	
Specsavers	Worst	£2.73bn	N/A	Not provided	

* Figure for GrandVision, which has since been acquired by EssilorLuxottica
† Converted from domicile currency to GBP on XE.com
‡ Figure for EssilorLuxottica
§ Latest figure on D&B Hoovers website – no accounting year provided. Converted from USD to GBP on XE.com
Δ FY2019

Main findings

The table shows that eight of the eleven companies we analysed received our worst rating for carbon management and reporting.

Only three companies in the multi-billion pound industry met the basic criteria needed to secure a middle rating.

With few new companies joining the industry, sustainability improvements are being led by opticians that are owned by corporations with a strong health or eye care presence, such as Walgreens Boots Alliance, EssilorLuxottica and GrandVision.

Other leading operators in the sector are part of generalist corporations – ASDA Opticians and Costco Opticians – that make no mention of carbon reduction policies which specifically relate to opticians. They therefore shared the lowest rankings with their independent rivals Duncan & Todd, Leightons, Optical Express, Scrivens and Specsavers.

While the larger independent chains Optical Express and Specsavers make statements about minimising their carbon footprints, neither company has published its carbon emissions data or set carbon reductions targets in line with international agreements.

Focus on EssilorLuxottica

David Clulow was rated under the carbon reporting of EssilorLuxottica, the largest eyewear company in the world. This helped the company to secure a middle rating in our research alongside Boots Opticians.
EssilorLuxottica has piloted a number of groundbreaking waste reduction initiatives, including a project to reduce the size of semi-finished lenses.

But it did not meet our criteria for reporting Scope 3 emissions or discuss any targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with international goals, such as the Paris-Climate agreement.

Before the takeover of its parent company GrandVision by EssilorLuxotticca in July 2021, Vision Express was the top performer in the category, securing a best rating for its earlier carbon management reporting.

GrandVision's annual impact report included a number of measures to reduce its carbon emissions, including introducing more sustainable products; a “second-life- programme to extend the life of its glasses”; improving energy efficiency, and using renewable energy across its stores; and optimising its supply chain in Asia. Alongside these industry specific strategies, the group was the only optician in the research to fully disclose its Scope 1 and 2 and Scope 3 emissions in line with our scoring criteria.

By improving its best practice standards, GrandVision could establish itself as a sustainability trailblazer, and inspire its rivals to introduce industry-focussed climate change measures. There is a risk however that GrandVision’s sustainability focus might be diluted under its new ownership.

Where next

According to a 2022 NHS report, 69% of annual GHG emissions are travel-related in the similar sector of optometry practices. It added that other factors that contribute to the carbon footprint of the sector include: energy (14%), procurement (11%), waste (5%) and water (1%).[1]

By encouraging UK opticians to position practices along public transport routes, ensure that production and retail are powered by renewable energy, minimise the carbon footprint of their products and packaging, and offer eyewear recycling schemes, these businesses can play their part in the transition to more sustainable societies that need to take place in the next 10 years.

1 https://networks.sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/The%20Annual%20Carbon%20Footprint%20of%20NHS%20Sight%20Tests%20at%20Five%20Optometry%20Practices_1.pdf

Carbon Ranking Research Project

This report is part of Ethical Consumer's broader Carbon Ranking Research Project where we are trying to use our bespoke climate rating in a range of reports to drive best practice into consumer facing industries.

As well as the climate change assessments within the broader ethical rankings used in the shopping guides which appear in our www.ethicalconsumer.org website, we also create special stand alone reports where resources permit. They include:

- Opticians (this report)
- Coffee Shops
- Computer Peripherals

To support this project for a specific sector or sectors, please contact Rob Harrison on consultancy [at] ethicalconsumer.org

Vision Express

Middle Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

Pre-takeover rating: Best Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

Ethical Consumer has presented two ratings for Vision Express to reflect the change in ownership at the company sine the publication of its impact report.

On 15th February 2022, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of GrandVision, the parent company of Vision Express, for information regarding what the company was doing to tackle climate change. After the publication of the impact report on which Ethical Consumer's original analysis of the company was based, GrandVision was taken over by EssilorLuxottica, which got a lower overall score in our carbon ratings.

As part of the criteria for Ethical Consumer's carbon management research, companies must be rated under the standards of their parent company at the time of publication. GrandVision therefore received a middle rating for carbon management and reporting in line with Ethical Consumer's analysis for the EssilorLuxottica (see David Clulow rating).

But Ethical Consumer thought it would be useful to analyse GrandVision's internal climate reporting to show how the company's carbon management policies might be impacted after being taken over by EssilorLuxottica.

The analysis for the rating detailed below was based on information provided in GrandVision's annual report for the year to 31 December 2020, published in March 2021, which defined the company's climate and emissions policies at the time:

Ethical Consumer was looking for the company to satisfy the following criteria in its public statements and reports:

1.a For the company to discuss its areas of climate impact, and to discuss plausible ways it has cut them in the past, and ways that it will cut them in the future.

1.b For the company to not be involved in any particularly damaging projects like tar sands, oil or aviation, to not be subject to damning secondary criticism regarding its climate actions, and to have a policy to avoid investing in fossil fuels.

2. For the company to report annually on its scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions (direct emissions by the company).

3. For the company to go some way towards reporting its scope 3 emissions (emissions from the supply chain, investments and sold products).

4. For the company to have a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements (counted as the equivalent of at least 2.5% cut per year in scope 1&2 emissions), and to not count offsetting towards this target.

If a company met all of these criteria it would receive a best rating. If it met parts 1&2 (impacts and annual reporting CO_2e) it would receive a middle rating. Otherwise it would receive a worst rating.

1.a The company met the criteria for this section.

Explanation: The company provides clear examples of its main sources of emissions:

“Our main CO2 emissions sources:

Manufacturing sites: Heating / Cooling / Lighting / Use of machinery

*2.88 kiloton CO2 (-15.3% vs. 2019)

Transportation: Inbound / Outbound / Business travel / Employee commuting (HQ)

4.15 kiloton CO2 (-4.6% vs. 2019)

Our store network: Heating / Cooling / Lighting

33.87 kiloton CO2 (-38.4% vs. 2019)

It also illustrated its emissions levels across the world.

GrandVision said it aimed to use the following initiatives to reduce emissions:

• “Optimized packaging in inbound and outbound transportation”

• “Implementing LED lighting across store network and increasing the usage of renewable electricity”

The company provided a number of examples where these initiatives had reduced emissions in the past, including:

1. In 2020, it retrofitted 471 stores with LED lighting, which led to an estimated: 3.51 GWh less energy consumption and1,451 tons avoided CO2 emissions. It claimed its LED-equipped stores had helpedconsume 27.3 GWh less energy and avoid emitting 8,845 tons CO2.

2. It introduced consolidation points in Asia, which optimized inbound flow of products by air and ocean. “This will lead to an estimated yearly savings of 6% on CO2 emissions,” the company said.

3. Use of renewable electricity across its store network contributed to a reduction in scope 2 and 3 emissions in 2020 (see tables below).

4. The company has reduced its scope 1 and scope 2 emissions by 39.7% since 2018.

1.b The company met the criteria for this section.

Explanation: Vision Express and GrandVision were not found to be involved in any particularly damaging projects.

2. The company met the second criteria.

Explanation: The company had published two years of scope emissions data in its annual report in line with the GHG Protocol Corporate Standard. It also provided a breakdown of store network and manufacturing sites:

Totals for 2020:

- Scope 1: 7.11 kilotons CO2e (down 2.7% from 2019)

- Scope 2: 29.64 kilotons CO2e (down 42% from 2019)

3. The company met the third criteria.

Explanation: The company reported all indirect (scope 3) emissions that occurred in the value chain, including both upstream (supply chain) and downstream (sold products) emissions. It also provided a breakdown of each emissions producing activity: Air travel, rail travel, employee commuting, inbound transport, outbound transport.

Total scope 3 emissions for 2020: 4.16 kilotons CO2e (down 34.8% from 2019)

4. The company met the fourth criteria.

Explanation: The company aimed to reduce its overall energy consumption and scope 1 and 2 emissions by 30% in 2025 compared to its 2018 consumption.

This equated to reduction of 4.29% a year, compared with the 2.5% threshold for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements.

The company said that it was working towards becoming ‘carbon-neutral’ – a phrase often used by corporations making unsubstantiated environmental claims. But GrandVision did not mention carbon offsetting and had detailed a number of quantifiable initiatives for directly reducing its emissions (see 1.a above).

The company’s statement did not name any international initiatives to reduce emissions, such as the Science-based targets (SBTi) or the Paris-Climate agreement. GrandVision had also signed up to have its climate change and environmental policies evaluated by the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). “This is a not-for-profit organization that runs the global disclosure system for investors, companies, cities, states and regions to manage their environmental impacts. CDP organizes an annual benchmark for companies, governments and cities and more, based on their environmental performance and reporting. In 2020, there were more than 9,500 participants.”

- *Targets and ambitions*

- “Reduce our overall energy consumption and scope 1 and 2 emissions by 30% in 2025 compared to our 2018 consumption”
- “Reduce the CO2 emissions per processed spectacle by 20% in 2025 compared to our 2016 consumption”
- “Reduce the CO2 emissions per transported spectacle by 30% in 2025 compared to our 2016 consumption”
- “Equip all our stores with LED lighting by 2025”
- “Centralize 85% our final production activities, which include edging and mounting lenses, by 2025.”

Conclusion:

GrandVision met criteria 1, 2, 3 and 4. Based on its impact report, GrandVision, which previously owned Vision Express, would have qualified for Ethical Consumer’s best rating for carbon management and reporting and would not have lost any marks under the Climate Change category.

But Vision Express actually received Ethical Consumer’s middle rating in this rating in light of EssilorLuxottica’s acquisition of GrandVision in 2021.

Walgreens Boots Alliance

Middle Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

On 4th February 2022, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Walgreens Boots Alliance (WBA) for information regarding what the company was doing to tackle climate change. All analysis was based on information provided in Walgreens Boots Alliance's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Report for the year to 31 August 2021, published on 26 January 2022.

Ethical Consumer was looking for the company to satisfy the following criteria in its public statements and reports:
1.a For the company to discuss its areas of climate impact, and to discuss plausible ways it has cut them in the past, and ways that it will cut them in the future.

1.b For the company to not be involved in any particularly damaging projects like tar sands, oil or aviation, to not be subject to damning secondary criticism regarding its climate actions, and to have a policy to avoid investing in fossil fuels.
2. For the company to report annually on its scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions (direct emissions by the company).
3. For the company to go some way towards reporting its scope 3 emissions (emissions from the supply chain, investments and sold products).
4. For the company to have a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements (counted as the equivalent of at least 2.5% cut per year in scope 1&2 emissions), and to not count offsetting towards this target.
If a company met all of these criteria it would receive a best rating. If it met parts 1&2 (impacts and annual reporting CO2e) it would receive a middle rating. Otherwise it would receive a worst rating.

1.a **Summary:** WBA met the criteria for this question by demonstrating how it had adapted its climate change strategy to tackle energy efficiency, the area where the company had the biggest impact on climate change. It had already reduced purchased emissions (electricity, heating etc.) and had set clear targets and method for reducing these emissions up to 2030.

Explanation: WBA stated that most of its scope 1 and scope 2 emissions result from "purchased electricity, heat and steam consumed by the company - are related to energy use for light and heating."

It said: "Of the fiscal 2021 emissions, 88 percent were from energy - including 89 percent electricity and 10 percent natural gas within energy emissions."

The company had responded by focussing its 2019 climate impact strategy on energy efficiency at Walgreens in the US and Puerto Rico. Boots UK will likewise continue energy efficiency programs and aimed to eliminate the use of natural gas in new locations. "In fiscal 2021 WBA's total carbon footprint based on our stated scope on was 1.7 million metric tonnes of CO2e (carbon dioxide equivalent), down 14.9 percent from our baseline year of fiscal 2019, mainly due to our energy efficiency projects in U.S. retail pharmacy locations and to the increased proportions of energy from renewable sources in the power grids on which we purchase."

"WBA's businesses invest in energy-efficient lighting, heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) units and refrigerators, engage and educate employees around energy consumption, invest in photovoltaic systems, use alternative energy management programs and participate in demand-response curtailment programs during peak periods. During fiscal 2021, Walgreens continued rolling out a robust energy management system (EMS) to monitor optimal performance of devices and provide initial insight into climate-stressed locations."

Also during fiscal 2021, Boots UK began replacing its trailers with the goal to complete 152 updates over three years. The new trailers allow for increased capacity, meaning fewer vehicles, decreased maintenance and less tire rubber.

WBA said that in the first two years of this strategy, fiscal 2020 and fiscal 2021, it had achieved a carbon emissions reduction of 8.3% and 14.9% respectively, compared with the baseline year (2019).

The reductions were part of a plan to reduce emissions by 30 percent by the end of fiscal 2030 compared with the company's baseline year of fiscal 2019. "The development of this goal was informed and guided by science-based methodology and builds on ongoing work by our businesses to reduce emissions."

"To improve fleet efficiency, Boots UK outsourced delivery systems to be managed by Alliance Healthcare logistics operations. Through Alliance Healthcare, Boots will introduce additional alternative fuel trials and collaborate with vehicle manufacturers on this exploration."

"We plan to achieve our emissions reduction target primarily through a continued focus on energy efficiency at Walgreens, our largest business entity, with nearly 9,000 retail pharmacy locations across the U.S. and in Puerto Rico. Walgreens will continue to invest in energy efficiency projects and energy management systems."

1.b The company was not found to be involved in any particularly damaging projects.

2) WBA met the second criteria. The company had published at least five years of scope emissions data in its CSR report library. Its 2021 ESG report included scope emissions figures for the past three financial years. For FY2021, scope 1 and 2 emissions were reported as:

- Scope 1: 325,000 metric tonnes CO2e (up 7.97% from 2020)

- Scope 2: 1,324,000 metric tonnes CO2e (down 10.54% from 2020)

3) The company did not meet the criteria for this question. Scope 3 emissions for FY2021 were reported as 56,000 metric tonnes CO2e, this was a 23.3% reduction from FY2019 (73,000 metric tonnes CO2e).

WBA reported its scope 3 figures in line with two of the definitions covered by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol: Business travel and downstream transportation and distribution (cars, aircraft, trains or by sea) for operations outsourced to third parties where deliveries are made exclusively for WBA businesses.

But the company did not take upstream supply chain emissions into account in its calculations

4. **Summary**: The company did not meet the fourth criteria. WBA's emissions reduction figure was in line with international goals, but the company did not meet the criteria for this section because it used offsetting techniques to meet its emissions targets. If WBA had provided a more detailed break-down of its emissions target, Ethical Consumer could have calculated whether the company meets the global threshold without the contribution from offsetting. By not providing this information, companies restrict the ability of organisations like Ethical Consumer to quantify the impact of these initiatives.

Explanation: The company had committed to reducing its absolute scope 1 and scope 2 emissions 30 percent by the end of fiscal 2030 compared with its baseline year of fiscal 2019.

This equated to an annual reduction of 2.72% in scope 1&2 emissions (30%/11 years), which exceeded the minimum 2.5% annual reduction threshold outlined in international climate agreements.

But the company said in the ESG report that some of its franchises used offsetting to reduce their carbon footprint.

For example: *"Farmacias Benavides is involved in a number of environmental initiatives related to reducing or offsetting carbon emissions, including working with Reforestación Extrema to plant 200 trees since fiscal 2019, renovating air conditioning equipment at 140 pharmacies, sponsoring a shared bicycle program and diverting milk formula waste from landfill to be used in the production of animal feed."*

And:

"[WBA-owned Cosmetics brand]Liz Earle became a certified CarbonNeutral company, having evaluated and reduced the carbon footprint of its business operations and offsetting its remaining carbon emissions."

Conclusion:

Walgreens Boots Alliance met criteria 1 and 2 but did not meet criteria 3 and 4.

Overall, Walgreens Boots Alliance received Ethical Consumer's middle rating for carbon management and reporting and lost half a mark under the Climate Change category..

David Clulow Opticians
Middle Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

On 3rd March 2022, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of EssilorLuxottica, which owned David Clulow Opticians and GrandVision/Vision Express, for information regarding what the company was doing to tackle climate change.

EssilorLuxottica SA was an Italian-French multinational corporation founded on 1 October 2018 from the merger of the Italian eyewear conglomerate Luxottica with the French Essilor.

On 1 July 2021, EssilorLuxottic acquired GrandVision, which owned Vision Express. GrandVision/Vision Express was given a Best Ethical Consumer for carbon management and reporting prior to this acquisition.

Ethical Consumer based its analysis on the 2020 Sustainability Report for EssilorLuxottica, which was published on 26 March 2021.

Ethical Consumer was looking for the company to satisfy the following criteria in its public statements and reports:
1.a For the company to discuss its areas of climate impact, and to discuss plausible ways it has cut them in the past, and ways that it will cut them in the future.

1.b For the company to not be involved in any particularly damaging projects like tar sands, oil or aviation, to not be subject to damning secondary criticism regarding its climate actions, and to have a policy to avoid investing in fossil fuels.
2. For the company to report annually on its scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions (direct emissions by the company).
3. For the company to go some way towards reporting its scope 3 emissions (emissions from the supply chain, investments and sold products).
4. For the company to have a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements (counted as the equivalent of at least 2.5% cut per year in scope 1&2 emissions), and to not count offsetting towards this target.
If a company met all of these criteria it would receive a best rating. If it met parts 1&2 (impacts and annual reporting CO2e) it would receive a middle rating. Otherwise it would receive a worst rating.

1.a The company **met** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: The group outlined the following key areas for reducing its carbon impact:

- Energy efficiency. “the Company’s energy management efforts focus on two main aspects: improving energy efficiency and increasing the use of renewable energy.”

The company said that scope 1 and scope 2 emissions have decreased by 6% in the past two years, in line with the reduction of the Company's energy consumption.

"As part of the energy efficiency strategy, 2020 sustainability targets were set aiming to reduce energy intensity by 15% compared to the 2015 baseline(1). With the impact of COVID-19, the energy intensity reduction target was not achieved due to a decrease in production volume and additional use of an air treatment system to ensure safe working conditions."

"The goal is to increase the effectiveness of the production processes and guarantee a more efficient use of energy and natural resources."

"The installation of meters to monitor energy consumption in all its facilities in real time and the use of specific indicators allow Luxottica to identify priority action areas and define new projects and improvement plans. This includes investments in the self-generation of renewable energy, which continued in 2020, and the implementation and management of energy efficiency projects at its manufacturing and distributions sites. Energy optimization efforts also include improvements in store energy efficiency in terms of lighting, air conditioning and heating systems. Associated with the Company's efforts of improving energy efficiency and structuring its energy management systems, Essilor's manufacturing sites in Thailand, China and Czech Republic and Luxottica's Italian, Chinese and Brazilian manufacturing facilities, Milan headquarters and Barberini lens manufacturing plant in Germany have obtained ISO 50001 certification over the years."

"Since 2013, Luxottica has been investing in reducing CO2 emissions by generating renewable energy thanks to the installment of solar panel systems and biomass heating systems at its manufacturing and distribution sites, starting with Italy. Their gradual roll-out has enabled the company to more than quadruple the quota of self-generated clean energy in Italy between 2015 and 2020. This effort continued in the second half of 2020 with the installment of two big photovoltaic systems in Agordo and Sedico sites. Their entry into service is expected in 2021, together with the installment of other photovoltaic systems at other sites."

Example of the company reducing emissions through renewable energy use:

"Since 2019, Essilor's Satisloh Italy development and manufacturing plant started producing renewable energy with the help of solar panels installed in their facilities. This project contributed to 33% of the site's energy consumption, *resulting in an annual reduction of 215 tons of CO2 emissions."*

- Transportation and product distribution: "The Company committed to continuously monitor the transportation market in order to find new and alternative solutions to reduce the carbon emissions working closely together with its logistics partners."

1.b The company **met** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: David Clulow was not found to be involved in any particularly damaging projects.

2. The company **met** the second criteria.

Explanation: The group provided scope 1 and scope 2 emissions totals for 2019 and 2020 in line with the GHG Protocol Corporate Standard.

Totals for 2020:

- Scope 1: 46 kilotons CO2e (down 7.14% from 2019)

- Scope 2: 696.8 kilotons CO2e (down 5.53% from 2019)

3. The company **did not meet** the third criteria.

Explanation: The group used the following definition for scope 3 emissions: “Scope 3 emissions here presented are generated from the transportation and distribution of EssilorLuxottica’s products. This figure is based on the combination of Essilor and Luxottica's transportation emissions data collected on a Well-to-Wheel basis (WTW) by the respective supply chain teams.”

The company only partially met the third criteria as it was unclear from the report whether the scope 3 emissions figures included supply chain emissions.

Total scope 3 emissions for 2020: 194.96 kilotons CO2e (down 18.7% from 2019)

4. The company **did not meet** the fourth criteria.

Explanation: The company said that scope 1 and scope 2 emissions have decreased by 6% in the past two years, in line with the reduction of the Company's energy consumption.

“As part of the energy efficiency strategy, 2020 sustainability targets were set aiming to reduce energy intensity by 15% compared to the 2015 baseline(1).

This strategy did not meet the criteria for discussing targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements.

Conclusion:

EssilorLuxottica met criteria 1, 2 and 3. It did not meet criteria 4. Overall, the company received Ethical Consumer’s middle rating for carbon management and reporting and lost half a mark under Climate Change.

Asda Opticians (Asda Group Ltd)

Worst Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

In December 2021, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Asda Group Ltd, looking for information on what the company was doing to tackle climate change.

Ethical Consumer was looking for the company to satisfy the following criteria in its public statements and reports:

1.a For the company to discuss its areas of climate impact, and to discuss plausible ways it has cut them in the past, and ways that it will cut them in the future.
1.b For the company to not be involved in any particularly damaging projects like tar sands, oil or aviation, to not be subject to damning secondary criticism regarding its climate actions, and to have a policy to avoid investing in fossil fuels.

2. For the company to report annually on its scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions (direct emissions by the company).

3. For the company to go some way towards reporting its scope 3 emissions (emissions from the supply chain, investments and sold products).

4. For the company to have a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements (counted as the equivalent of at least 2.5% cut per year in scope 1&2 emissions), and to not count offsetting towards this target.

1.a. Ethical Consumer found its 'first ever ESG report', dated 2020/21, which contained its carbon reporting across scope 1, 2 & 3 emission types, as well as a webpage regarding 'Carbon' in its 'Better Planet' strategy. Regarding scope 1 emissions, the company discussed consolidating journeys to reduce impacts and using lower emission refrigerants. Concerning scope 2 emissions, the company mentioned energy efficiency projects. Regarding scope 3 emissions, the company discussed its collaboration with suppliers to map their carbon impacts, and a commitment of 'Top 20 commodities sustainably sourced by 2025'. This was considered to constitute an adequate discussion of its climate impacts.

As a large supermarket, the company was also expected to discuss deforestation in its supply chain within its climate-impacts. It was mentioned in the ESG report, and the role of its key commodities supply chains in contributing to deforestation. On its Farming and Nature web page, in a section on soy it stated that "we don't want to contribute to deforestation or the loss of other valuable habitats, so we have a clear transition plan."

1.b Asda Group was found to be involved in damaging projects, specifically the ownership and management of petrol stations.

2. Asda Group reported on its scope 1 emissions of "direct fuel", "fuel" and "refrigerants" as well as its scope 2 emissions of "electricity". Its 2019 scope 1 emissions were "365,932 tCO_2e", down 5% from 2018. The scope 2 emissions for this year were "298,538 tCO_2e", down 14% from the year before.

3. Asda Group reported on scope 3 emissions of "business travel", "electricity T&D", "waste" and "water". Its 2019 scope 3 emissions were "37,413 tCO_2e", down 13% from the year before. However, scope 3 did not include its supply chain emissions.

4. The company had a reduction target for scope 1 and 2 emissions of 50% on a 2015 baseline by 2025. This represented a target of a 5% reduction of emissions year on year, so was in line with international agreements.

As Asda Group had involvement with damaging projects related to the retail of oil, it overall received a Worst Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting and lost a full mark in the Climate Change category.

Reference:
ESG Report 2020-21 (10 August 2021)

Black & Lizars Optometrists
Worst Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

On 2nd March 2022, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Black & Lizars Optometrists for information regarding what the company was doing to tackle climate change. Ethical Consumer looked for climate change or sustainability policies on the website and through a Google search of the business. It was noted that the company reported an annual turnover of £9.8m in its latest accounts from 2019.

Given that the company had an annual turnover of less than £10.2m, Ethical Consumer was only looking for the company to satisfy the first criteria of its carbon management and reporting rating: 1.a For the company to discuss its areas of climate impact, and to discuss plausible ways it has cut them in the past, and ways that it will cut them in the future.

1.b For the company to not be involved in any particularly damaging projects like tar sands, oil or aviation, to not be subject to damning secondary criticism regarding its climate actions, and to have a policy to avoid investing in fossil fuels.

Small companies which met this criteria would receive a best rating. Small companies that did not meet this criteria would receive a worst rating. Small companies which did not meet this criteria but were found to be offering a lower carbon alternative for its sector would get a partial exemption and receive a middle rating.

1.a The company **did not meet** the criteria for this section.

To meet the first criteria Lazars needed to have discussed climate change or its carbon emissions on its website. Ethical Consumer found no mention of relevant policies to address climate change on the website for Black & Lizars. And the company did not specify that its products are climate cutting or explicitly discuss reducing climate impacts.

1.b The company **met** the criteria for this section.

Black & Lizars was not found to be involved in any particularly damaging projects.

Conclusion:

Black & Lizars did not meet criteria 1 for companies with a turnover of less than £10.2m. It therefore received Ethical Consumer's worst rating for carbon management and reporting and lost a whole mark under the Climate Change category.

Costco Opticians
Worst Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

On 15th March 2022, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Costco Wholesale Corporation, the parent company of Costco Opticians, for information regarding what it was doing to tackle climate change. Ethical Consumer found a Climate Action Plan on its website.

Ethical Consumer was looking for the company to satisfy the following criteria in its public statements and reports:
1.a For the company to discuss its areas of climate impact, and to discuss plausible ways it has cut them in the past, and ways that it will cut them in the future.

1.b For the company to not be involved in any particularly damaging projects like tar sands, oil or aviation, to not be subject to damning secondary criticism regarding its climate actions, and to have a policy to avoid investing in fossil fuels.
2. For the company to report annually on its scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions (direct emissions by the company).
3. For the company to go some way towards reporting its scope 3 emissions (emissions from the supply chain, investments and sold products).
4. For the company to have a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements (counted as the equivalent of at least 2.5% cut per year in scope 1&2 emissions), and to not count offsetting towards this target.
If a company met all of these criteria it would receive a best rating. If it met parts 1&2 (impacts and annual reporting CO2e) it would receive a middle rating. Otherwise it would receive a worst rating.

1.a The company **did not meet** the criteria for this section.

Explanation:

- Costco discusses its areas of climate impact:

"Our Climate Action Plan focuses on areas of our operations and value chain that have the potential to create outsized impacts on reducing our global CO2e footprint, pathways to conserve water and minimize waste generated from our operations and merchandise supply chains. We are actively exploring opportunities, ideas, pilot projects and sector initiatives for improvements in particularly challenging areas of our scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions. Key examples include HFCs, concrete, transportation fuels, renewable energy and more."

- The Action Plan provides some detailed insight into the business activities that create the most emissions:

“Two categories collectively represent over 75% of our 2020 baseline scope 1 and 2 emissions:

Scope 1: Hydrofluorocarbons (i.e., HFCs) and other gases from our refrigeration units in our warehouses; and

Scope 2: Purchased electricity that powers our corporate offices and warehouses.”

- The company also showed an awareness of international standards for tackling climate change, with references to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Science Based Target (SBT) Initiative’s framework.

Costo said it: “will continue to consider the business implications to setting SBTs in alignment with the new Corporate Net Zero Standard and other sector-based guidance.”

Costco discussed the following measures for reducing emissions in the future:

“In 2021, we developed a five-part scope 1 and 2 decarbonization strategy that includes the following steps:

- ◆ Design and implement centralized data collection, analysis and reporting solutions to support warehouse-level carbon, water and waste performance management;
- ◆ Reduce carbon emissions through operationally-viable energy and refrigeration projects;
- ◆ Purchase renewable energy and Install on-site renewables when operationally feasible; and
- ◆ Acquire high-quality, verified renewable energy certificates (RECs) after we exhaust all other cost-effective reduction pathways.”

“As of January 2022, our new scope 1 and 2 reduction commitments are as follows:

- Scope 1: accelerate the phase-out of HFCs and increase our investment in refrigeration retrofits to reduce refrigerant emission Global Warming Potential (GWP) by 30% by 2030 as compared to our 2020 baseline.
- Scope 2: increase purchased renewable electricity in our global operations from 15.8% in 2021 to 30% by 2025; 60% by 2030; and 100% in global operations by 2035.”

But the company **did not** provide any examples of how it had cut emissions in the past. Figures in question 2 showed that the company’s emissions had increased every year since 2016. The company said that this increase reflected its continual expansion and that its carbon intensity (emissions/sales growth) had decreased over this period. Costco reported that its carbon intensity had decreased annually from 2.060 in 2016 to 1.560 in 2020.

“We are working hard to decrease our energy usage and associated CO2e,” the company said. “While our total emissions did increase, our intensity continues to decrease despite adding more warehouse locations, expanding our reporting to include manufacturing plants, which includes our new chicken plant, and beginning to partially report our Costco Logistics delivery business."

1.b The company **did not meet** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: Parent company Costco sold the group's own signature branded fuel at its petrol stations across the UK and the US.

Costco also sold discounted private jet membership in the US through a partnership with Wheels UP.

2. The company **met** the second criteria.

Explanation: Costco reported its scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions as a combined figure, dating back to 2016.

Total for 2020:

- Scope 1&2 emissions: 2,663 kilotons CO_2e (Up 3.53% from 2019)

3. The company **did not meet** the third criteria.

Explanation: Costco did not report the company's scope 3 emissions on its website. It was taking steps to begin reporting scope 3 but had not given a date for introducing this disclosure policy.

It listed the following target with a milestone date of December 2022: "Examine scope 3 best practices, trends, & opportunities to address supply chain emissions, building off existing waste-to-landfill and closed loop product pilot programs."

It went on to say that:

"We are taking action to better understand the scope and scale of our scope 3 Indirect emissions footprint, which remains outside direct control of our Operations.

"In FY21, we developed FY2020 baseline estimate for "Waste Generated from Operations" for all reporting Costco locations (147,138 $mtCO_2e$) based upon the total tonnage to landfill and total tonnage diverted using the DEFRA protocol.

"We are developing an initial scope 3 inventory for "Purchased Goods and Services" and an approach to characterize other scope 3 categories.

"We intend to begin calculating our global water usage and evaluate water conservation strategies across our operations.

"We will continue to refer to the UN IPCC's 6th Assessment Report; the outcomes of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland; SBTi's new Corporate Net

Zero Standard; the forthcoming SBTi guidance on Forest, Land and Agriculture (FLAG), scheduled to be released in March 2022; Gold Standard’s Value Change Initiative; and GHG Protocol’s existing scope 3 Calculation Guidance and scope 3 Evaluator tool.”

4. The company **did not meet** the fourth criteria.

Explanation: Costco said it was committed to an annual 2 percent per year reduction target for global scope 1 and 2 CO2e emissions. “Should we achieve this target we estimate we can reduce cumulative scope 1 and 2 CO2e emission 20 percent by 2030 and 45 percent by 2035 from a 2020 base year.”

But the targets fall short of goals set by international agreements (counted as the equivalent of at least 2.5% cut per year in scope 1&2 emissions).

The report details the following plan to address its emissions targets:

“Over the next three fiscal years (2022-2024), we will determine absolute scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon dioxide-equivalent (CO2e) emissions reduction targets and detailed action plans””

Conclusion:

Costco met criteria 2. It did not meet criteria 1, 3 or 4. Overall, the company received Ethical Consumer’s worst rating for carbon management and reporting and lost a whole mark under the Climate Change category. Costco’s current climate change policies focussed on analysis and strategy development. The company had few quantifiable policies in place to reduce emissions. Costco’s overall carbon reduction efforts were undermined by its petrol sales and continued international expansion.

Duncan & Todd Opticians & Hearing Care
Worst Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

On 2nd March 2022, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Duncan & Todd Opticians & Hearing Care for information regarding what the company was doing to tackle climate change. Ethical Consumer looked for climate change or sustainability policies on the website and through a Google search of the business.

Ethical Consumer was looking for the company to satisfy the following criteria in its public statements and reports:
1.a For the company to discuss its areas of climate impact, and to discuss plausible ways it has cut them in the past, and ways that it will cut them in the future.

1.b For the company to not be involved in any particularly damaging projects like tar sands, oil or aviation, to not be subject to damning secondary criticism regarding its climate actions, and to have a policy to avoid investing in fossil fuels.
2. For the company to report annually on its scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions (direct emissions by the company).
3. For the company to go some way towards reporting its scope 3 emissions (emissions from the supply chain, investments and sold products).
4. For the company to have a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements (counted as the equivalent of at least 2.5% cut per year in scope 1&2 emissions), and to not count offsetting towards this target.
If a company met all of these criteria it would receive a best rating. If it met parts 1&2 (impacts and annual reporting CO_2e) it would receive a middle rating. Otherwise it would receive a worst rating.

1.a The company **did not meet** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: Ethical Consumer found no mention of relevant policies to address climate change on the website for Duncan & Todd.

1.b The company **met** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: Duncan & Todd was not found to be involved in any particularly damaging projects.

2. The company **did not meet** the second criteria.

Explanation: Duncan & Todd did not report the company's scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions on its website.

3. The company **did not meet** the third criteria.

Explanation: Duncan & Todd did not report the company's scope 3 emissions on its website.

4. The company **did not meet** the fourth criteria.

Explanation: Duncan & Todd did not discuss any targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements on its website.

Conclusion:

Duncan & Todd did not meet criteria 1, 2, 3 or 4. Overall, the company received Ethical Consumer's worst rating for carbon management and reporting and lost a whole mark under Climate Change.

Leightons Opticians & Hearing Specialist
Worst Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

On 1st March 2022, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Leightons Opticians & Hearing Specialist, for information regarding what the company was doing to tackle climate change. Ethical Consumer looked for climate change or sustainability policies on the website, including its Our Social Purpose page, and through a Google search of the business.

Ethical Consumer was looking for the company to satisfy the following criteria in its public statements and reports:
1.a For the company to discuss its areas of climate impact, and to discuss plausible ways it has cut them in the past, and ways that it will cut them in the future.

1.b For the company to not be involved in any particularly damaging projects like tar sands, oil or aviation, to not be subject to damning secondary criticism regarding its climate actions, and to have a policy to avoid investing in fossil fuels.
2. For the company to report annually on its scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions (direct emissions by the company).
3. For the company to go some way towards reporting its scope 3 emissions (emissions from the supply chain, investments and sold products).
4. For the company to have a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements (counted as the equivalent of at least 2.5% cut per year in scope 1&2 emissions), and to not count offsetting towards this target.
If a company met all of these criteria it would receive a best rating. If it met parts 1&2 (impacts and annual reporting CO_2e) it would receive a middle rating. Otherwise it would receive a worst rating.

1.a The company **did not meet** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: Ethical Consumer found no mention of emissions cuts on the website for Leightons. The company discussed two initiatives for tackling climate change:

- “supporting The Woodland Trust, a tree-planting charity

- “stocking ‘a range of sustainable glasses frames’”

But it did not quantify the impact of these measures on past and future emissions.

1.b The company **met** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: Leightons was not found to be involved in any particularly damaging projects.

2. The company **did not meet** the second criteria.

Explanation: Leightons did not report the company’s scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions on its website.

3. The company **did not meet** the third criteria.

Explanation: Leightons did not report the company’s scope 3 emissions on its website.

4. The company **did not meet** the fourth criteria.

Explanation: Leightons did not discuss any targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements on its website.

Conclusion:

Leightons did not meet criteria 1, 2, 3 or 4. Overall, the company received Ethical Consumer’s worst rating for carbon management and reporting and lost a whole mark under the Climate Change category.

Optical Express Opticians
Worst Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

On 22 February 2022, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Optical Express, for information regarding what the company was doing to tackle climate change. Ethical Consumer found an environment statement (date April 2021) and a sustainability statement.

Ethical Consumer was looking for the company to satisfy the following criteria in its public statements and reports:
1.a For the company to discuss its areas of climate impact, and to discuss plausible ways it has cut them in the past, and ways that it will cut them in the future.
1.b For the company to not be involved in any particularly damaging projects like tar sands, oil or aviation, to not be subject to damning secondary criticism regarding its climate actions, and to have a policy to avoid investing in fossil fuels.
2. For the company to report annually on its scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions (direct emissions by the company).
3. For the company to go some way towards reporting its scope 3 emissions (emissions from the supply chain, investments and sold products).
4. For the company to have a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements (counted as the equivalent of at least 2.5% cut per year in scope 1&2 emissions), and to not count offsetting towards this target.
If a company met all of these criteria it would receive a best rating. If it met parts 1&2 (impacts and annual reporting CO2e) it would receive a middle rating. Otherwise it would receive a worst rating.

1.a The company **did not meet** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: Optical Express said it was “fully committed to minimising our environmental impact and becoming carbon negative.”

Ethical Consumer found that the company’s reporting addressed broader environmental issues such as waste and pollution, and did not specifically address climate change or carbon.

1.b The company **met** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: Optical Express was not found to be involved in any particularly damaging projects.

2. The company **did not meet** the second criteria.

Explanation: Optical Express did not report the company’s scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions in its sustainability and environment statements.

3. The company **did not meet** the third criteria.

Explanation: Optical Express did not report the company's scope 3 emissions in its sustainability and environment statements.

4. The company **did not meet** the fourth criteria.

Explanation: Optical Express did not discuss any targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements in its sustainability and environment statements.

Conclusion:

Optical Express did not meet criteria 1, 2, 3 or 4. Overall, the company received Ethical Consumer's Worst rating for carbon management and reporting and lost a whole mark under the Climate Change category.

Scrivens Opticians
Worst Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

On 21st February 2022, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Scrivens, for information regarding what the company was doing to tackle climate change. Ethical Consumer did not find any mention of climate change or sustainability policies on the website or through a Google search of the business.

Ethical Consumer was looking for the company to satisfy the following criteria in its public statements and reports:
1.a For the company to discuss its areas of climate impact, and to discuss plausible ways it has cut them in the past, and ways that it will cut them in the future.
1.b For the company to not be involved in any particularly damaging projects like tar sands, oil or aviation, to not be subject to damning secondary criticism regarding its climate actions, and to have a policy to avoid investing in fossil fuels.
2. For the company to report annually on its scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions (direct emissions by the company).
3. For the company to go some way towards reporting its scope 3 emissions (emissions from the supply chain, investments and sold products).
4. For the company to have a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements (counted as the equivalent of at least 2.5% cut per year in scope 1&2 emissions), and to not count offsetting towards this target.
If a company met all of these criteria it would receive a best rating. If it met parts 1&2 (impacts and annual reporting CO2e) it would receive a middle rating. Otherwise it would receive a worst rating.

1.a The company **did not meet** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: Ethical Consumer found no mention of climate change or emissions cuts on the website for Scrivens.

1.b The company **did not meet** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: The company did not discuss any relevant sector-specific policies on its website.

1.c The company **met** the criteria for this section.

Explanation: Scrivens was not found to be involved in any particularly damaging projects.

2. The company **did not meet** the second criteria.

Explanation: Scrivens did not report the company’s scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions on its website.

3. The company **did not meet** the third criteria.

Explanation: Scrivens did not report the company’s scope 3 emissions on its website.

4. The company **did not meet** the fourth criteria.

Explanation: Scrivens did not discuss any targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements on its website.

Conclusion:

Scrivens did not meet criteria 1, 2, 3 or 4. Overall, the company received Ethical Consumer’s Worst rating for carbon management and reporting and lost a whole mark under Climate Change category.

Specsavers

Worst Ethical Consumer rating for carbon management and reporting

On 14th February 2022, Ethical Consumer viewed the website of Specsavers for information regarding what the company was doing to tackle climate change. We found a Section 172 statement and two paragraphs about 'Our Planet' in a separate sustainability statement.

Ethical Consumer was looking for the company to satisfy the following criteria in its public statements and reports:
1.a For the company to discuss its areas of climate impact, and to discuss plausible ways it has cut them in the past, and ways that it will cut them in the future.

1.b For the company to not be involved in any particularly damaging projects like tar sands, oil or aviation, to not be subject to damning secondary criticism regarding its climate actions, and to have a policy to avoid investing in fossil fuels.
2. For the company to report annually on its scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions (direct emissions by the company).
3. For the company to go some way towards reporting its scope 3 emissions (emissions from the supply chain, investments and sold products).
4. For the company to have a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements (counted as the equivalent of at least 2.5% cut per year in scope 1&2 emissions), and to not count offsetting towards this target.
If a company met all of these criteria it would receive a best rating. If it met parts 1&2 (impacts and annual reporting CO2e) it would receive a middle rating. Otherwise it would receive a worst rating.

1.a **Result:** The company did not meet the criteria for this section.

Explanation: The company had a broad understanding of its areas of climate impact: "We recognise that the consumption of energy, the use of non-renewable resources, water, plastics and packaging, and waste creation are all things we need to monitor and reduce in every part of our business:

- Our stores account for the largest share of our carbon footprint through the direct and indirect emission of greenhouse gases related to energy use.
- Our manufacturing and distribution sites have a significant carbon impact through energy use, with the additional elements of water, packaging and waste.
- Our support offices also contribute to our carbon impact by using energy for administration and IT infrastructure."

The company planned to take the following steps to address these impacts:

- Monitor legislative progress towards and continue to plan for the introduction of the proposed UK plastic packaging tax in 2022
- Finalise the data collection and reporting methodology required for compliance under Streamlined Energy & Carbon Reporting (SECR) mandatory greenhouse gas (GHG) reporting for 2021/22
- Monitor legislative progress towards the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system for packaging due for introduction in the UK in 2023, and better understand the environmental impact of our packaging use, and impact of changes to the legislation

But the company was only taking the following action to address its climate impact this year: “Continued to review the installation of smart metering and brought in a new partner and platform for energy data collection and analysis, with the capability of push reporting and alarm reporting.”

And it had not published any details about quantifiable actions that had reduced emissions in previous years.

For example, the company did not take the following actions to reduce emissions:

- Improving energy efficiency
- Switching to renewable energy sources
- Reducing its transportation emissions

The company’s strategy for reducing its climate impact focussed on reducing direct emissions rather than offsetting: “For us, this will involve reducing our operational emissions, focusing on the materials we use, the way they’re produced, where they come from, how they get to us, our packaging and product waste, as well as what happens to our products once they reach the end of their life.”

1.b **Result:** Specsavers met the criteria for this section.

Explanation: The company was not found to be involved in any particularly damaging projects.

2. **Result:** The company did not meet the second criteria.

Explanation: The company does not report its annual scope 1&2 greenhouse gas emissions.

3. **Result:** The company did not meet the third criteria.

Explanation: The company does not report its scope 3 emissions.

4. **Result:** The company did not meet the fourth criteria.

Explanation: The company made the following pledge on its website:

“We’re aiming for carbon-neutral and beyond, with a target to become climate positive by 2035 – taking out more C02 from the atmosphere than we put in.”

And the company’s strategy for reducing its climate impact focussed on reducing direct emissions rather than offsetting: “For us, this will involve reducing our operational emissions, focusing on the materials we use, the way they’re produced, where they come from, how they get to us, our packaging and product waste, as well as what happens to our products once they reach the end of their life.”

But the company’s targets were not aligned with international agreements and did not include quantifiable annual reductions in scope 1&2 emissions.

Conclusion:

Specsavers did not meet criteria 1, 2, 3 or 4.

Overall, Specsavers received Ethical Consumer’s worst rating for carbon management and reporting and lost a whole mark under the Climate Change category.