**Environmental, Social and Governmental Policy**

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**Introduction**

Microlink recognise that its corporate and social responsibility is paramount to its values and operations and in expressing its commitment to their stakeholders, including their clients, employees, investors, suppliers, wider communities, and the environment.

They realise that their environmental, social, and governmental (ESG) responsibilities to these stakeholders and integral to their business. Microlink aim to demonstrate these responsibilities through their actions and within their corporate policies. They build relationships with their stakeholders by engaging their employees to consider the needs of others and involve themselves in public service.

The operational and ultimate responsibility for the commitment to their ESG responsibilities lie with the Directors of Microlink, although every employee is expected to give their full co-operation to the principles in their activities at work. Consultants and visitors are also expected to apply their environmental principles.

**Principles of ESG**

ESG goes beyond the old system of corporate and social responsibility and is at the heart of business models and should be reflected in the corporate strategy of the business. The core principles of ESG are designed to drive continuous improvement and value within the business:

* **Positive Impact** – Progress must be measured and tracked to evidence that the impact has been positive.
* **Transparency** – Good governance requires transparency. Everyone from customers to stakeholders should be able to access relevant and honest ESG data.
* **Profitability** – Businesses must align their ESG goals to the long-term profitability of the company, otherwise it is not truly embedded into the business model.

**Microlink’s ESG Goals**

Microlink’s main ESG Goals for 2024 are as below:

1. Continue to have a positive impact on their carbon emissions level, with the aim to reduce their emissions further year on year and maintain a high level of transparency when publicly reporting on their emissions targets and progression towards these targets.
2. Promote disability awareness and inclusion within their local community, and the wider community, through their work with various schools and local councils throughout the country. Also, make an effort to increase their social value in the local community through volunteering, offering advice to young people, and donating to local charities.
3. Continue to motivate and empower our employees through training and employment opportunities. Ensure that all our staff, regardless of gender, race or sexuality feel comfortable and secure at Microlink.

**Environmental**

Microlink believes that environmental sustainability is of paramount importance for businesses in the 21st century and it endeavours as much as possible to reduce its own carbon emissions. It annually and publicly publishes its Carbon Reduction Plan on its website and has several factors in place to reduce carbon emissions including operating a Hybrid working system for colleagues (this has allowed it to “shut-down” the upstairs of Microlink House greatly reducing Scope 1 & 2 emissions from electric and gas consumption), researching the use of solar panels on the roof of Microlink House to reduce their electricity consumption, and installing a more energy efficient insulation throughout Microlink House and the adjoined Warehouse to reduce gas consumption, especially through the winter months.

**Near-Term and Net-Zero Targets**

Microlink has SBTi verified Near-Term reduction targets of 42% from a 2022 baseline to a total of 117 tCO2e per year by 2030, or before. It have already exceeded its original internal projection of a reduction to 138 tCO2e per year by 2030.

Microlink is in the process of researching and planning to reach a Net-Zero Targets by 2050.

**Minimising Waste**

Microlink makes concerted efforts to reduce the amount of waste it produces. In 2019,it adopted a “clear-desk policy” company-wide which encourages employees to reduce the amount of paper waste created in the office through the use of digital documentation. This has produced exceptional results across the business and it now produces minimal paper waste.

Similarly, it tries to reduce the amount of single-use plastic waste used in packaging through the implementation of a cardboard shredder in the warehouse. This shredder is used to turn cardboard waste into sustainable packaging that can be used in place of plastic or Styrofoam.

Microlink is a member of Veolia’s “Waste to Energy” power stations across Hampshire which uses an energy conversion technology to turn waste into renewable energy. Due to this, none of the waste from Microlink goes to landfill.

**Sustainability in Supply Chain**

Microlink audits its suppliers on environmental factors annually including questions covering emissions, waste reduction, policies in place and any reduction targets they have, both internal and externally verified, i.e. SBTi. Due to the majority of the suppliers being other SME’s, Microlink has noticed that most suppliers do not yet have this information readily available. To resolve this issue, it provides links to online calculators and GHG emissions factors to help smaller companies calculate their emissions. Microlink is always available to its suppliers if they need any further assistance for anything emissions related. Microlink aims to help its suppliers on their “path to green” as more accurate data from suppliers would enable Microlink to fine tune their own emissions further.

**Social**

**Diversity**

As a Disability Confident leader, and an employer of many individuals with disabilities, both physical and mental, diversity is of upmost importance to Microlink. It aims to spread awareness through its employees, local community and internationally to empower disabled persons from all over the world. This is achieved by:

* Researching and promoting all technological advancements that will aid disabled persons in their workplace, education and home environment
* Disability Awareness Training for all employees and stakeholders, as required
* Taking initiatives in Charities and working in partnership with organisations to help spread awareness of disabilities and to offer opportunities to disabled persons both in education and work
* Making screening tools available in countries where disabled persons are at a disadvantage in order to create awareness within those countries.

Microlink ensures and encourages diversity in the workplace and delivers diversity and inclusion training to all staff upon commencement of employment. Furthermore, it works with local schools and colleges to assist disabled students with CV’s and employability, including offering interview workshops.

**Living Wage**

Microlink promises to pay, and does pay, the prevailing National Living Wage rate as a minimum to all its UK based workers, irrespective of age. As of April 2023, the current National Living Wage rate was £10.42 per hour.

**Remote Working**

Microlink operates a mainly hybrid workforce, but this workforce is split into three sections: Office, Remote and Hybrid. Each employee’s contract has been amended to state what working style they have been assigned to by Microlink. Every employee has the opportunity to ask to change this style, i.e. from Office to Hybrid, but this is a decision made by HR and the Senior Management Team. Microlink believes this helps promote sustainability through lowering carbon emissions from commuting to and from the office and allows it to hire the best individuals from across the country, regardless of location.

**Social Value in Local Community**

Being a part of the local community is important to Microlink, and it strives to help as much as it can. There are several areas in which Microlink tries to improve the local environment:

* Each year, employees group together to help with the Southampton Christmas Toy Appeal, a charity drive that was started almost a decade ago by a Microlink employee. This helps children and young people throughout the Southampton area at Christmas time.
* Microlink aims to help as many young people as possible and there are several ways in which it has done this:
	+ Until 2022, Microlink were a part of the Kickstart programme for 18-23 year olds, run through the Job Centre by the Department of Work and Pensions to assist young adults into work, offering placement and job opportunities that may otherwise have been unavailable to them. This programme was a great success and Microlink was able to help several young people with work experience in their sector, and still employs 2 of these individuals.
	+ Microlink are currently in discussions and working with Solent LEP to introduce more assistive technology, and training for this technology, into schools (both standard and SEND) to assist young people with disabilities. The aim of this to is empower young people to overcome the barriers they encounter and implement strategies and coping mechanisms that they can take with them when they enter the workforce.
* Microlink always try to involve as many third party organisations as possible in the locality of any public contract and they are looking to extend the reach of help provided on private contracts too.

**Governance**

**Their Values and Ethics**

Microlink has a number of core values including inclusion,

Microlink ensures that it undertakes all its business activities in an ethical way, with respect and trust to and from its stakeholders and employees. This is achieved through responsible, open and fair discussion in and around business operations with both existing and potential clients, and providing a service underpinned with integrity, quality and care. Microlink makes certain of this through the following actions:

* Ensuring that all advertising and documentation about the business and its activities is clear, informative, legal, decent and honest
* Being open and honest about the products and services it offers, and telling customers what they need and want to know, including actions Microlink takes to be socially responsible
* Registering and resolving customer complaints in accordance with its high standard of service – ensuring a swift and efficient resolution to any issue
* Listening to clients so that they can be offered the best possible service designed to suit their needs
* Ensuring that its services are benchmarked and evaluated constantly, to improve its competitiveness within its niche market

Microlink also actively participates and organises various charity events within the local area, supports local schools and colleges with events such as mock interviews, assists with job-hunting and CV building alongside the Job Centre Southampton, and was a key Gateway member of the Kickstart programme within Southampton until 2022.

**Their Employees**

Microlink is extremely proud of its employees, who are at the heart of its ability to deliver an extraordinary customer experience and understands the fundamental role they play in its success. It respects its employees, encourages their development and training, promotes equality, and considers the interests of its employees including their welfare and health and safety. Microlink will empower employees and recognises individual contributions of employees and rewards them fairly.

Engaging employees through their worthwhile and satisfying employment in a successful business is paramount. Microlink operates equal opportunities for all present and future employees and offers its employees clear and fair terms of employment and provides resources to enable their continual development, including various courses and apprenticeships.

Microlink ensures that all employees of any nationality, gender, sexual orientation, race or religious background are treated with respect and without physical, mental or sexual harassment. Microlink provides a clean, safe working environment in line with their Health and Safety Policy.

**Bribery and Corruption**

Microlink has a stringent set of rules and policies relevant to Bribery and Corruption to which they ensure every employee abides. If an employee of Microlink is found to be taking bribes from clients, suppliers or competitors, or is working with clients, suppliers or competitors to the detriment of Microlink, the employee’s contract may be terminated with immediate effect. All reports of bribery and corruption from other employees submitted in good faith will be supported by Microlink in accordance with its Whistleblowing Policy.

All accounting employees are also subject to training and checks to ensure there is no bribery, fraud or corruption, including the acceptance of gifts, rewards or entertainment. However, as a rule, small tokens of appreciation, such as flowers, or a bottle of wine, may be retained by employees, as this is assessed on a case-by-case basis. Training is completed upon commencement of employment and annually thereafter.

**Review and Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed annually and monitored continually throughout the year. Any updates or changes to the policy will be made in the review period.

This policy is the responsibility of the Legal and Compliance department and will be updated by the Compliance Manager or Legal Counsel.