



... **ESG ACCORD** Spotlight Interview

**Stephen Jones**  
Clear Solutions Wealth and Tax Management

**“I have been advising on sustainable investing for over 15 years, before the acronym ESG was invented! When we talked about dark and light green! How things have changed.”**

The next question for Stephen Jones, Managing Director of Clear Solutions, had to be about any other changes there have been over this time? Stephen’s answer; **“There is much greater awareness and demand for sustainable investing he said...the latest generation is considerably more aware. Governance and behaviour are far more important than they used to be. People expect better leadership and the incredible success of documentaries and films about the environment have had a big impact ( Thank you David Attenborough!). ”**

Given this growing interest, we asked what are the greatest challenges to giving advice in this space? Stephen was clear that **“getting the right information and research is hard. It is available, but it can be hard to validate it.”** So, we asked, how are you overcoming these challenges? **“Well, there is a growing recognition by fund managers of the best practice that is needed today. They are more transparent, and this will improve as there is more regulation coming.”**

We asked if there were concerns about greenwashing? **“Yes of course. And for that we are largely dependent on the analysts, and their expertise. What we could really do with is some embarrassment. To wake the industry up”.**

Moving on to using the ESG Accord Compliance Framework, we asked why it was needed? Stephen replied; **“I firmly believe that we need to have specialist knowledge to achieve best practice in areas like this, and we have been very satisfied that we made the right choice. And as regulation changes, it is very good to have them with us to guide us.”**

We then asked Stephen about any positive business changes as a result of the new approach to a compliance framework? **“Yes, but not what we anticipated. The outcome was that we looked at all our business processes, and it has been very positive in regards of ensuring we viewed our existing process with a fresh perspective, resulting in some small but significant changes. It has given us a whole new approach to improving our service to our clients.”**

To close we asked what advice Stephen would give to an adviser new to giving advice on ESG and sustainable investing? **“Create the right culture, embed the processes, and buy in the expertise where you need it. It will save you so much time!”**

Thank you Stephen for sharing your views and experience.

**For more info on Clear Solutions Wealth and Tax Management:**

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ESG Accord is a member of the Association of Professional Compliance Consultants. ESG Accord is a member of the UK Sustainable Investment and Finance Association.

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