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Reading's Economy & Destination Agency



SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

Showing what good looks like



Values-driven organisations **ensure sustainable profitability**

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REDA

CSR Highlights at a Glance



Official Statement



REDA (Reading's Economy and Destination Agency), as a not-for-profit Community Interest Company (CIC), has embedded social and environmental responsibility into the very fabric of its mission:

to be the guardians of the Reading Place Brand and shape a better Reading for all. Their commitment to sustainability is an intrinsic part of their governance, with all surpluses being directly reinvested back into the community they serve. This core principle drives a comprehensive approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that touches on every area of their operation, spanning environmental, community, workplace, and philanthropic pillars.

Their environmental commitment is demonstrated through active participation in the Reading Climate Change Partnership, where REDA encourages the entire business community to adopt greener practices. Internally, the agency is committed to measuring and reducing its carbon footprint across areas like energy use, travel, and supply chain management. Externally, they manage concrete initiatives within the town centre that contribute to sustainability, such as providing services for businesses to recycle over 1,040 tonnes of cardboard and more than 1,100 kilograms of small electricals. Furthermore, they actively support local biodiversity, evidenced by the planting of water-purifying reedbeds and wildflower areas to attract pollinators.

Community impact is at the heart of their strategy. REDA's services are explicitly

designed to benefit residents, businesses, and communities in need. They manage various programmes that help local people secure quality, sustainable jobs, and receive advice on careers and business start-ups. As a partner to the Reading Borough Council Social Inclusion Board, they conduct outreach to promote training and job opportunities, reinforcing their commitment to creating an inclusive and prosperous local economy.

Ethically and in the workplace, REDA operates under transparent and accountable governance as a CIC, publishing a public statement on their community impact. They uphold high standards for staff, adopting the ethical labour practices of their partner, Reading Borough Council, which includes being an Equal Opportunities Employer. They provide essential training, flexible working options, and supportive policies for work-life balance. Finally, their philanthropic engagement sees them prioritising partnerships with local charities and not-for-profit organisations. They facilitate community engagement through initiatives like organised litter-picking days and major fundraising events, such as the annual Pancake Race, which supports Launchpad, a local homelessness prevention charity.

In essence, REDA's sustainability commitment is a holistic, multi-layered strategy that integrates social purpose with economic activity, ensuring that their daily work directly contributes to a more sustainable, inclusive, and thriving future for the city of Reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nigel Horton-Baker'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Nigel Horton-Baker

Chief Executive
REDA

CSR a **Strategic Priority** for the REDA board



In 2023, REDA made a formal commitment at board level to seek CSR Accreditation, embedding this ambition into its Corporate Risk Register and signalling its importance as a strategic priority. Most board members already had CSR or ESG policies in their own organisations and strongly supported the principle that REDA should reflect the standards it encourages others to adopt.

As a not-for-profit Community Interest Company, REDA reinvests all surpluses into its work, and its Board—made up entirely of volunteers—values being part of an organisation that takes CSR seriously.

The organisation's leadership reflects this ethos in practice: the Chairman contributes to the Reading Climate Change Partnership, helping shape the strategy to achieve Carbon Net Zero by 2030, while the Chief Executive sits on the Reading Borough Council Social Inclusion Board. Collectively, their purpose is to act as guardians of the Reading Place Brand, ensuring the town is prosperous, welcoming and sustainable.

Through the Reading City Vision, REDA brings together social, environmental and economic priorities, guiding partners and stakeholders towards a shared future.

The REDA team, who personally and professionally value CSR, are actively involved in shaping and monitoring this agenda. The organisation's projects are designed to support communities in need, help residents find sustainable work, assist businesses to grow, make the town centre more environmentally friendly and enhance the welcome extended to visitors, including those displaced from overseas.

REDA went on to win an International CSR Excellence Award at an awards ceremony held at St Pauls Cathedral in June 2025.



Nigel Horton-Baker (REDA CEO) with Richard Collins (CSR-A CEO).



Environmental Report



Environmental stewardship is central to REDA's role in shaping a sustainable Reading. As a member of the Reading Climate Change Partnership, REDA not only models good practice within its own operations but also supports local businesses to adopt sustainable behaviours. Its ambition to secure "Green BID" status demonstrates a long-term commitment to driving positive change in the town centre.



Energy

REDA previously operated from a 1980s council-owned library building fitted with solar panels, but the structure itself was inefficient, with poor insulation and outdated heating. In July 2025, REDA moved to a lower-emission office with strong energy and waste-saving measures. The move reduced the overall office footprint and prioritises affordability and high EPC ratings.

Its Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) has also trialled energy audits with town centre companies, encouraging wider adoption of carbon reduction practices.

Travel

REDA actively champions sustainable travel in order to reduce its carbon footprint. The majority of staff commute by public transport, cycling or on foot, with only minimal reliance on cars—and where this occurs, it is largely due to health needs. Flexible working and the use of digital platforms further reduce travel

requirements. Staff believe this has reduced travel by car and made them more efficient, with less time spent travelling and more availability for productive work.

Beyond its internal operations, REDA promotes sustainable mobility through initiatives such as the Reading Walks Festival, which attracted more than 800 participants in 2023, and by ensuring events are accessible via walking, cycling or public transport.

Supply Chain

REDA has made a conscious effort to support local suppliers and the circular economy, procuring goods and services within a 10-mile radius where possible. Through the REDA Business Network, it hosts regular discussions on sustainable business practice and is working with partners to establish a local purchasing portal. The next stage is to map supplier carbon footprints and integrate sustainability into supplier reviews.



REDA promotes conservation across the town, including planting projects.

Natural Resources

REDA plays a visible role in promoting conservation across the town centre. Projects include installing reedbeds on the Kennet Canal, planting wildflowers and reducing reliance on single-use resources. Office practices include using recycled paper, refillable cartridges and minimal printing.

Waste Management

Waste minimisation is embedded in both office practice and town-wide services. REDA adopts digital-first communications, recycles paper and card and uses recycled furniture sourced locally. The BID recycles hundreds of tonnes of cardboard each year (400 tones recycled in 2022-23), offers small electrical recycling services and is piloting a project to repurpose computers for community training. Future plans include expanding waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) services and strengthening policies on waste management.

REDA's future CSR and environmental actions focus on embedding sustainability across operations, partnerships, and town-wide initiatives.

REDA Future Plan Summary

- **Supplier Engagement:** REDA will compile a supplier list prioritising local business, aiming for fewer than 10% of suppliers to travel more than 10 miles to deliver goods or services. All suppliers will be encouraged to have a CSR policy or be working towards one.
- **Board Member Environmental Policies:** REDA will register and monitor the CSR and environmental policies of all Board Member companies, ensuring each has measurable targets.
- **Strategic Alignment:** The Reading 2050 Vision refresh and the Economic Development Framework 2025–35 will embed environmental commitments and policy proposals.
- **BID Environmental Services – Year 2:** REDA will expand BID initiatives including recycling WEEE and cardboard, tree planting, mapping town centre environmental commitments, delivering Carbon Literacy training for businesses, and monitoring Christmas light emissions.



The BID offers small electrical recycling services and recycles hundreds of tonnes of cardboard every year.

Workplace Report



As an employer, REDA recognises that our staff are central to our impact. Our team is employed under Reading Borough Council contracts, ensuring robust employment practices, professional development and well-being support.

Training

Staff benefit from annual CPD planning, opportunities to attend external conferences and workshops, and leadership training. REDA has also provided apprenticeships and internships, including placements for students from Reading's twin town Düsseldorf, Germany. Development plans are set collaboratively through appraisals, ensuring training is tailored to individual and organisational needs.

Labour Practices

REDA upholds strong labour standards, including ethical recruitment, equal opportunities, flexible working and family-friendly policies. Staff returning from maternity leave, for example, have been supported with flexible arrangements such as condensed working weeks. Safeguarding, cyber security and health and safety training are mandatory for all employees.

Equal Opportunities Employer

- Ethical recruitment
- Health and Safety training
- Cybercrime/ Health and Safety/ Data protection / training mandatory
- Minimum Wage policy
- Ethical Practices

Ethical practice is embedded into REDA's governance. It files annual CIC34 statements and publishes full annual reports outlining its impact on residents, businesses and the local economy. REDA is committed to paying suppliers within two weeks and utilises its own financial systems so payments can be made online as soon as possible.

REDA has been instrumental in supporting the setup of Ethical Reading and sits on its steering group encouraging debate and training and raising awareness about ethical and sustainable issues. This has included the adoption of an ethical recruitment charter.



REDA publishes annual reports outlining its impact on residents, businesses, and the local economy.

Governance

Transparency and accountability are important to REDA. In addition to legal compliance as a CIC, REDA produces a Company Risk Register, publishes reports and consults regularly with businesses through surveys, newsletters and events. Its Board is deliberately representative of key sectors, ensuring a broad range of expertise. CSR Accreditation is tracked at Board level, reinforcing its strategic importance.

Policies

Well-being and equality are embedded within policies inherited from Reading Borough Council and within REDA's own organisational values. Plans are underway to publish a clear set of CSR-aligned workplace policies and to strengthen documentation around recruitment and onboarding for new staff.

REDA Future Plan Summary

Staff Safety, Equipment & IT Compliance: REDA will ensure all staff complete mandatory training and conduct workplace assessments as required.

- **Staff Turnover & Support:** REDA will ensure all new staff complete induction programmes and provide support for staff on maternity leave.
- **Good Governance:** REDA will achieve and maintain Business Improvement District (BID) organisation accreditation and ensure Board membership reflects required skills and sector representation.

Community Report



REDA was established as a Community Interest Company precisely to benefit its community. Its work primarily supports the business community but extends to residents, particularly those in deprived areas. The aim is to generate inclusive prosperity through engagement, local issue resolution, wealth creation and education.



Engagement

Through management of two BIDs, REDA represents nearly 700 businesses in Reading town centre. Engagement is delivered through daily patrols by BID wardens, regular surveys, committee meetings and newsletters. BID renewal processes, which involve consultation and ballots, ensure accountability to the business community. Wider engagement is achieved through the City Vision newsletter, which reaches over 1,000 businesses with updates on economic trends and initiatives.

Local Issues

REDA plays a leading role in shaping Reading's future through the Reading 2050 City Vision, developed with contributions from over 20,000 people. It is also a key partner in the Social Inclusion Board and South Reading Project, working to tackle long-term unemployment and generational poverty.

REDA works with Reading Borough Council to deliver Developer-led Employment and Skills Plans and to utilise developer funding towards economic development projects. Both address local issues and create employment training and self-employment opportunities as well as supporting local small businesses.

Wealth Creation

As an economic development agency, REDA drives prosperity in the local area through job fairs, training and careers advice in schools. It provides business grants and support for start-ups, networking opportunities to create a circular economy, promotes inward investment and markets Reading as a visitor and conference destination. The agency supports key sectors in the local economy especially the film industry and industries requiring green skills and tourism. It also sponsors arts events in the town centre and supports national heritage open days.

In 2020, REDA worked with local entrepreneurs to set up REDA Business Network to support other businesses, encourage local purchasing and a circular economy. Monthly online guest speaker and networking events continue to be held on topics of interest and 2 face to face events are organised each year attended by around 50-60 people. This has now been rebranded as the REDA Business network, and bi-monthly guest and networking events. REDA works with the business founders, by recommending topics and guest speakers for each event and also provided funding for the website.

Projects & Groups

Targeted interventions are designed to support Reading's most deprived communities. In South Reading, REDA created a pilot programme to address unemployment and skills gaps, which the Council is now making a mainstream initiative. Health and well-being are promoted through schemes such as 'Walk Works', which recently marked its 100th group walk. REDA also celebrated 3 years of their 'Walk Works Town Centre' weekly walks for employees in the town centre.



REDA's pilot programme to address unemployment and skills gaps in South Reading.

Education

Partnerships with the Education Business Partnership and other organisations help bridge the gap between schools and employment. REDA particularly focuses on schools in deprived areas, providing workshops, careers advice and volunteer engagement. It also offers placements and internships, ensuring that young people gain practical experience and insight into the world of work.

REDA provide one opportunity a year to a young person. In the past this has included:

- Apprentices in social media and marketing
- Work experience for 3 weeks for an overseas school student from Reading's twin town of Düsseldorf.
- Work Experience placement for a local school student in year 11
- Use of a student internship scheme from Reading University team project for 4 weeks
- Summer work experience for a university first year undergraduate

REDA Future Plan Summary

- **Improving Website Functions and Reach:** REDA will continue to develop and expand website functionality to improve accessibility and engagement
- **Reading 2050 City Vision:** Refresh to be completed by January 2026
- **Wealth Creation and Tackling Inequality:**
 - Publish annual summary of BID service outputs including:
 - Warden savings from reducing shoplifting
 - Training, job advice, and support for young people and adults
 - Grants to small businesses
 - Networking events via REDA Business Network
 - Film sector supply chain networking and events



Celebrating three years of Walk Works in Reading centre.



Philanthropy Report



Philanthropy is woven into REDA's culture through charitable involvement, volunteering, fund-raising and gifts in kind. REDA actively partners with charities, CICs and not-for-profit organisations in its supply chain and project delivery. This approach ensures that its economic activity also strengthens the third sector locally.

Volunteering

Board members contribute significant voluntary time, not only through governance but also by leading committees and initiatives. Staff and businesses volunteer through town centre activities such as visitor welcome services and litter-picking events, while individuals also give time to local charities and community organisations. Indeed, REDA recently celebrated the 4th consecutive year of their 15 Reading Station Welcome Volunteer Ambassadors programme.

Pro Bono

Although no formal policy exists, staff frequently use their skills to support charities and community groups, offering pro bono support in areas such as coaching sports, language teaching and volunteering on the Canal Trust Board.

Fundraising

Fundraising events play a vital role in REDA's philanthropic impact. The annual Pancake Race raised £2,000 for Launchpad, a local homelessness prevention charity, while other events such as the Winter Warmer clothing appeal and Sports Day have supported organisations including Cirdic and Dingley's Promise.

Gifts in Kind

REDA coordinates food bank collections, Christmas giving initiatives and donations of hampers and sponsorships. A new scheme of electronic tap-to-donate points is being rolled out in 2025 to encourage easy giving in support of homeless charities.

REDA Future Plan Summary

- **Volunteering:** REDA will record annual participation numbers for litter-picking, visitor kiosk staffing, and Walks Festival volunteers.
- **BID Charitable Fundraising Events:** REDA will monitor and report the amount raised at each event, as well as tracking regular giving from town centre donation points supporting homeless charities.
- **Charitable Giving Policy:** REDA will review and improve targeting and consistency of giving activities. The organisation will also explore opportunities to use large-scale events (e.g. GAIA) to raise awareness of social and environmental issues.



The Reading Walks Festival (left) involves many volunteers. The BID's Summer Donation Drive (right) raises a lot of charitable donations.

Future Planning

REDA recognises that CSR is an evolving journey rather than a fixed destination. Immediate priorities include formalising policies across all four pillars, improving data capture on carbon emissions and social value, and embedding CSR reporting within Board governance. Training for Board members on CSR responsibilities will reinforce this commitment, while calculating REDA's carbon footprint will provide a benchmark for progress.

CSR will remain integral to REDA's annual reporting, ensuring transparency and accountability to its stakeholders. The organisation is committed to continuous improvement, guided by measurable targets and informed by stakeholder engagement.

Conclusion

Through its role as guardian of the Reading Place Brand, REDA demonstrates how economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability can be integrated. Its commitment to CSR Accreditation reflects both accountability and ambition: a determination to measure its progress, act on its values and lead by example.

By embedding CSR into its operations, governance and partnerships, REDA is strengthening its ability to deliver meaningful impact for businesses, residents and visitors alike. The Social Impact Report illustrates a clear trajectory: one where Reading's prosperity is matched by inclusivity, sustainability and a shared sense of responsibility for the town's future.



Examples of items collected during the BID's Summer Donation Drive.

ESG - Measuring the Value of Social Responsibility

These icons are displayed throughout this social impact report to illustrate where ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) compliance and relevance is demonstrated to external agencies when ESG reporting is required.



REDA activities align with UN Sustainable Development Goals

The UN SDGs are a call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognise that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

REDA activity aligns with the following SDGs.

CSR-A recommends that **REDA** register their commitments to support the implementation of the SDGs.



All 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are:



REDA

have achieved Silver CSR Accreditation



UAC-CSRA-UK-09-24-READINGSECON-S-7506

INITIAL ACCREDITATION DATE **30/09/2024** **SILVER**

What is CSR Accreditation?

CSR-A has established a holistic framework that delivers a measurable standard for environmental and social responsibility.

A framework that is supported by our CSR Four Pillars of environment, workplace, community and philanthropy. A standard that states that environmental and social responsibility should be for every organisation. Effective CSR policy embedded in company strategy allows you to enrich the quality of lives for all by investing in social value as a part of your culture. This provides purpose for employees and measures impacts for senior teams, helping to ensure a sustainable and profitable business. Beyond this your efforts will help to build a better world for future generations by improving the environment and ensuring a cohesive community to live and work in.

It is amazing what many of us are already doing that we don't talk about. CSR-Accreditation provides the perfect platform for you to tell your positive story.

Good social responsibility policies drive **positive corporate change.**

With well-defined objectives and measurable targets, your CSR accreditation will provide the foundation for a more sustainable and ethical organisation.

Achieving CSR accreditation is a visible testimony of excellence in social responsibility activity. The accreditation process helps you integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into your business operations and strategy.

CSR Accreditation will:

- Deliver information required for ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) reporting.
- Identify UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) which you may be supporting.
- Write a social value policy.
- Identify how your carbon footprint can be reduced contributing to climate change action and the Race to Zero.
- Produce content for a social impact report.
- Enrich, enable and engage employees, shareholders and stakeholders.

Driven by heightened consumer awareness of environmental issues and with tightening government regulations organisations are now looking for innovative ways to meet their social responsibilities. It is clear that those who understand this and explore ways in which issues should be built into strategy, are likely to reap the rewards of an enhanced competitive position, benefiting all stakeholders and wider society along the way.

This **Social Impact Report** was created by **CSR-Accreditation** on behalf of

REDA (Reading's Economy and Destination Agency)

To produce a similar report for your organisation please call **01494 444494** or visit **www.csr-accreditation.co.uk** and find out how we can benefit you.

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