

SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

Showing what good looks like

Values driven organisations **ensure sustainable profitability**

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Buckinghamshire Business First CSR Highlights at a Glance



Official Statement



As we proudly celebrate our re-accreditation of the Gold CSRA Standard, Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) is delighted to present our Social Impact Report—a milestone that not only reflects our commitment

to responsible business, but also our role in leading systemic change for the benefit of people, the planet, and prosperity across Buckinghamshire.

At BBF, we support organisations to be the best they can be—and we lead by example. BBF has embedded environmental responsibility at the core of both its internal operations and external service offerings. From helping others save over 193,000 tCO₂e through our climate programs to accelerating our own net-zero ambition from 2050 to 2040, we demonstrate that climate leadership is possible—and necessary—at every level

Our commitment to inclusive growth, social mobility, and future talent development underpins all we do. We champion initiatives that inspire the wider business community to support and invest in the workforce of tomorrow. By connecting schools, employers, and career seekers—and encouraging exploration of non-traditional career pathways—we are helping to create a future where opportunity is accessible to all.

As an entrepreneurial not-for-profit, led by a volunteer board of SME leaders, BBF is more than a business network—it is a force for good, leading systemic change for people, planet, and prosperity in Buckinghamshire. Together, we are shaping a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable Buckinghamshire.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philippa".

Philippa Batting

CEO, Buckinghamshire Business First

Committed to Integrating Sustainability

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) is committed to integrating sustainability into every aspect of its operations, guided by the four pillars of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Environment, Workplace, Community, and Philanthropy. This commitment has been underlined by the recent achievement of a third CSR Accreditation, receiving a third consecutive Gold award with a significantly improved score.

This social impact report highlights the organisation's continued dedication to sustainable and ethical business practices, underpinned by a committed team and comprehensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

Leadership of the CSR agenda is driven by CEO Philippa Batting and Head of Operations Sarah Randall, with strong support from the board and senior management. Their collective advocacy ensures that CSR values are integrated throughout the organisation.

The company's motivation for its CSR efforts stems from a strong belief in the responsibility of businesses to positively influence society and the environment. This belief translates into meaningful actions designed to create lasting change.

Key initiatives include reducing environmental impact through energy-efficient and renewable energy practices, fostering community engagement by supporting marginalised groups and local causes, and prioritising employee well-being through initiatives that promote work-life balance and professional growth.

These efforts have yielded measurable benefits, including stronger community relationships, improved employee satisfaction, and enhanced stakeholder trust and reputation.



Environmental Report



The organisation has achieved remarkable progress toward net zero, **halving its emissions ahead of schedule** and bringing forward its net zero target from 2050 to 2040. Emissions have dropped from 96.029 tonnes CO₂e in 2022/23 to 62.797 tonnes in 2024/25, **marking a 23.3% year-on-year reduction.**



Energy

Energy efficiency and carbon reduction are central to BBF's mission, both within its operations and in its support for local businesses. The organisation's track record of environmental activity gives it a platform to attract and retain staff who also care about the environment. The positive outcomes of sustainability efforts serve as a source of pride and motivation throughout the organisation, giving it credibility among the local business community when encouraging them to engage in their own sustainable practices.

BBF complements its carbon reduction efforts with Gold Standard carbon offsetting projects, such as clean cooking initiatives in Malawi and solar PV farms in Vietnam. Since 2022, support provided to 532 businesses has resulted in 53,145 tonnes of CO₂e savings. Overall, since 2009, 4,514 businesses have been supported, with total emissions savings exceeding 193,000 tonnes CO₂e.

One of the organisation's most successful initiatives, Low Carbon Workspaces, has driven significant impact, delivering annual savings equivalent to the energy usage of over 1,500 homes and directly improved air quality, by reducing nitrous oxide by 500kg.

Sustainability events organised by BBF such as Net Zero MK and the Net Zero Summits have reinforced the economic and community value of sustainability, inspiring change and action. The organisation also established the Net Zero Buckinghamshire Collaboration Circle, bringing together a group of like-minded businesses to pool knowledge, resources and ideas on the journey to Net Zero.

Natural Resources

BBF embeds resource-conscious behaviours across the workforce, especially in the context of homeworking. Team members actively share tips on reducing electricity, food waste, and water use, Lunchtime Learning sessions are held on topics such as installing solar panels and choosing renewable energy tariffs. Company surveys now show staff uptake of renewable energy tariffs exceeds the national average.

The organisation helps businesses conserve natural resources through grants and advice for upgrades such as LED lighting, solar panels, and energy-efficient boilers. Through the Energy Resilience Programme, 70 businesses measured their carbon footprint and saved nearly two tonnes of CO₂e during initial phases.

BBF also fosters future environmental leadership through the Green Schools Challenge, which recently won a national award for innovation in education. The group is deeply involved in advocacy, participating in regional and national sustainability boards and working groups to promote environmental progress.

Efforts to address the green skills gap include support for the Bucks Green Energy Skills Hub through the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), which helps to train the workforce for low-carbon building retrofits and sustainable energy technologies.



Travel

As a remote-working organisation, BBF has low emissions related to commuting. Microsoft Teams is used for most meetings, while car-sharing is encouraged for necessary travel. The company has earned green accreditation from the Modeshift STARS platform, reflecting its commitment to low-carbon travel.

BBF supports sustainable travel through major events like Clean Air Day, held in 2022 and 2024, which promoted electric vehicles and clean transportation to businesses. Through partnerships and projects such as the Buckinghamshire EV Project, businesses are supported in transitioning to electric and hybrid vehicles.

The organisation also promotes work-from-home practices to its business community and has supported the creation of low-carbon travel plans for over 50 local organisations.

Waste

Waste reduction is embedded into daily operations. IT equipment is recycled or donated through the Equipment Disposal Policy, and disposal is managed in line with WEEE regulations. The use of biodegradable and recyclable materials at events—such as bamboo pens and event banners—helps minimise landfill waste.

Printing is limited, reusable water bottles are provided to staff and event attendees, and policies are in place to reduce plastic usage. Close ties with the local business community have also created ad-hoc waste reduction opportunities, such as composting collaborations at events.






Supply Chain Management

BBF is committed to reducing Scope 3 emissions and promotes sustainable procurement across its supply chain. When organising events, venues and suppliers are selected based on their sustainability credentials and the use of single-use plastics is actively discouraged. Recyclable materials are prioritised, including for banners and lanyards.

The organisation evaluates suppliers on their green credentials, including their Net Zero commitments and future plans. While these conversations can be challenging, BBF uses a collaborative and evidence-based approach to influence supplier behaviour to ensure that all of the products and services they provide are as sustainable as possible. The aim is for these conversations to inspire change and help build a net zero supply chain that benefits our wider economy and society.

To build a greener business community in Buckinghamshire, BBF offers Carbon Literacy Training, which trained over 100 people in 2024/25. The training empowers individuals to reduce carbon emissions by their organisation. Other outreach includes adviser support, promotional campaigns, and advocacy for accreditation schemes like the Good Business Charter and UN Race to Zero.

BBF also produces podcasts covering topics like waste reduction, circular economy practices, and innovative approaches from leaders in the sector, including interviews with Biffa and Moogies Ltd.



In partnership with Buckinghamshire Council, we hosted a day filled with innovation, inspiration, and collaboration aimed at driving business growth and net zero action at Aylesbury Waterside Theatre.

Workplace Report



BBF believes our people are the **foundations on which our organisation exists**. The company views staff development as both an ethical responsibility and a **foundation for long-term growth**.



Training

Senior leaders play a hands-on role in recommending relevant training topics, ensuring each team's needs are met. The platforms also serve as ongoing resources, offering articles and e-learning to deepen employee understanding. Some staff training is delivered through online platforms, providing a mix of legally required compliance training and wider professional development.

BBF also offers Lunchtime Learning sessions, which promote collaborative, peer-led training and has invested in comprehensive training to better support neurodiverse individuals, both internally and among the businesses it serves. Courses cover a broad spectrum of conditions, including ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, and Dyspraxia, along with communication and productivity strategies. This training ensures that staff—particularly HR and Business Advisers—can provide respectful, knowledgeable support to neurodivergent individuals.

In alignment with BBF's environmental mission, selected staff have undertaken Carbon Literacy Training to enhance their understanding of climate change and sustainable practices.

Staff Appraisals & Personal Development Planning

Structured around annual appraisals and mid-year reviews, BBF's development planning empowers employees to assess past training, set new goals, and request further support. These appraisals tie individual objectives to broader organisational goals and the bonus scheme, helping ensure a clear link between personal growth and company success. Regular check-ins and ongoing dialogue between managers and team members reinforce a culture of continuous improvement.

Labour Practices

At BBF, how people work together is fundamental to delivering high-quality service to the business community and fulfilling the company's vision. The organisational culture is guided by three core values: Succeeding Together, Integrity and Fairness, and Making a Difference. These values shape the team's everyday behaviours and decisions.

Work/Life Balance & Flexibility

BBF champions remote and flexible working, with 100% of our staff working from home since March 2020. Regular team meetups, company away days, and social gatherings help maintain connection and team spirit. Approximately half of the staff work part-time, supported by a Flexible Working Policy that allows employees to tailor their work schedules to their needs from day one.

The company recognises that flexible work arrangements enhance productivity, morale and retention. Each request is considered individually, with a commitment to balancing employee needs with organisational priorities.

Fair Pay & Benefits

Buckinghamshire Business First is a proud accredited Living Wage Employer, ensuring all staff earn at least the Real Living Wage (£12.60 per hour outside London in 2024/25) and also offers a bonus scheme, pension, holiday purchase scheme and loyalty rewards. Staff are actively encouraged to use their full holiday entitlement and the company supports planned time off to ensure wellbeing and workload balance.

Staff wellbeing is prioritised through a range of support mechanisms. The Wellbeing Team includes a buddy system for new starters to promotes a sense of community through initiatives such as virtual coffee breaks and book clubs.



Inclusive & Supportive Employment

BBF is committed to fostering an inclusive workplace. As a Level 2 Disability Confident Employer, the company actively promotes inclusive employment through a partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Initiatives include:

- Promoting the Disability Confident scheme, resulting in at least 18 new sign-ups
- Participating in the Disability Confident Employer Forum
- Sharing DWP resources through our communication channels
- Hosting joint events and webinars to raise awareness and provide guidance
- Referring organisations to initiatives such as the DICE Club with the National Paralympic Heritage Trust

These efforts reflect a dedication to building a diverse and accessible workforce across the wider business community.

Support for Development & Transitions

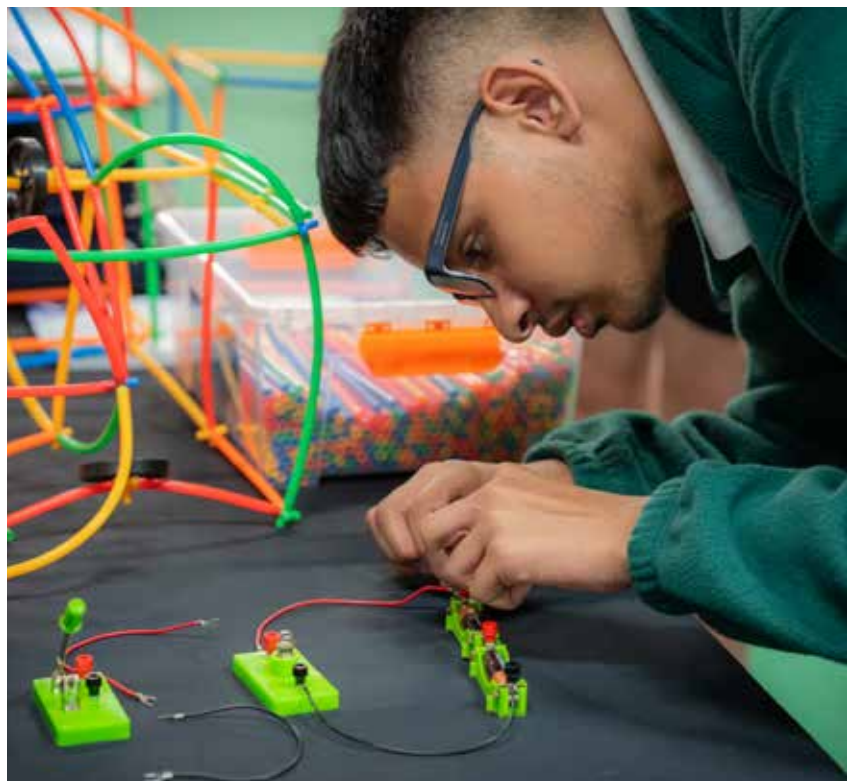
BBF supports employees not only during their time with at the company, but also during transitions. When staff are preparing to leave but don't yet have work or training lined up, BBF ensures they're equipped with the tools, guidance, and support they need to confidently take their next steps.

The organisation has also had success with the Kickstart Scheme, helping young people into employment, including one individual who transitioned from Kickstart placement to a full-time job within two months. While BBF has previously hired an apprentice directly, the main focus is on promoting apprenticeship and work experience opportunities for other employers. In 2023/24, the company supported 254 businesses to

engage with schools and colleges, helping develop future talent pipelines.

Ethical Practices

The BBF Group is committed to conducting business ethically and responsibly at local, national, and international levels. Guided by a long-standing principle of Corporate Citizenship, the organisation recognises its role in shaping positive social, environmental, and economic outcomes. This is exemplified by over two decades of delivering environmentally focused business support, contributing to a reduction of more than 193,000 tonnes of CO₂e and supporting the career development of young people across the region.





BBF's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Policy outlines a holistic commitment to ethical operations. This includes:

1. Environmental stewardship, with a goal of reaching net zero by 2040, using energy-efficient practices and responsible offsetting.
2. Fair employment, through Living Wage accreditation, support for professional growth, and an inclusive, respectful workplace.
3. Transparent and legal business conduct, maintaining high ethical standards and full compliance with laws and human rights.
4. Community engagement, including volunteering, partnerships with local organisations, and charitable donations.
5. Ethical procurement, sourcing from responsible suppliers that uphold sustainability and fair labour practices.

Governance

The BBF Group is governed by principles of transparency, accountability, and staff engagement, ensuring ethical and effective oversight at all levels of the organisation. These values underpin both internal operations and external partnerships, forming a strong foundation of trust and responsibility.

Transparent Leadership & Communication

The organisation enables open communication through regular all-staff updates, where key organisational developments, challenges, and financial performance are shared. Monthly Q&A sessions with the CEO offer an open platform for team members to raise questions directly, either live or in advance, helping to fulfil the Good Business Charter commitment of ensuring workers' voices are heard.

Accountability & Oversight

BBF is accountable to a range of stakeholders, including funders and a diverse, representative Board of local business leaders. The Board provides governance oversight and strategic input to ensure alignment with the needs and values of the Buckinghamshire business community.



The Confident Futures Skills Show is Buckinghamshire's most exciting experiential careers event aimed at young people and career seekers with special educational needs and disabilities or those facing barriers to entering the workforce.

Community & Philanthropy Report



Buckinghamshire Business First recognises that **thriving businesses are at the heart of strong communities**. While its core mission is to support business growth and economic prosperity in Buckinghamshire, BBF also **champions broader community engagement**, using its influence to ensure local people benefit from **vibrant high streets, increased employment, and more opportunities**.



BBF's support programmes have helped deliver tangible outcomes for local communities, including job creation, youth development through apprenticeships, t-levels and business start-up support, and enhanced public services through stronger local enterprises.

Volunteering & Community Recognition

In June 2024, BBF introduced a paid volunteering scheme allowing each employee one fully paid day annually to contribute to a local cause. With a potential organisational investment of up to £7,500 annually, this initiative reflects BBF's commitment to community involvement.

BBF also celebrates local businesses making a difference through its Community Champions Award at the Buckinghamshire Business Awards, recognising outstanding corporate citizenship.

Local Issues

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) plays an active role in addressing local social and economic challenges across the county, particularly in areas experiencing the highest levels of hardship. By working in close partnership with local government, education providers, and community organisations, BBF supports initiatives that aim to improve opportunity, inclusion, and well-being for all Buckinghamshire residents.

Targeting Deprivation Through Strategic Partnerships

BBF sits on the board of Opportunity Bucks, a programme focused on ten of Buckinghamshire's most deprived wards. The initiative seeks to improve outcomes around education, employment, public spaces, health, and living standards. BBF contributes to strategy development and delivery, helping shape projects with real-world impact.

Improving Skills for a Greener Economy

In May 2024, BBF supported the launch of the Bucks Green Energy Skills Hub in the launch of the Bucks Green Energy Skills Hub at the Aylesbury Campus of Bucks College Group. The hub offers targeted training for students and professionals, helping to address local skills shortages and preparing the workforce for jobs in low-carbon construction and engineering.

BBF also engages younger residents through the Green Schools Challenge, which empowers Year 12 students to develop sustainable solutions for local environmental challenges. With support from local businesses, students pitch their ideas to a Dragons' Den-style panel. This programme recently earned BBF an "Innovation in Education" award, recognising its positive influence on the future workforce and environmental leadership.



Connecting with the Charity Sector

BBF recognises the importance of the charity and social enterprise sector in the local economy. As a Heart of Bucks Community Investor, BBF is committed to supporting local charities and communities within Buckinghamshire.



Wealth Creation

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) plays a vital role in supporting the county's economic prosperity by empowering local businesses to grow, innovate, and create jobs.

In 2024/25, BBF's support helped Bucks businesses create 388 jobs, adding £13.18 million in value to the local economy (calculated using the Social Value Portal's TOMs framework). A further 1,655 jobs were safeguarded, while 394 businesses received tailored workforce development advice. Over the year, BBF delivered 21,933 business assists to 2,119 unique businesses, and awarded £2.2 million in business grants.

Flagship programmes such as the Growth Programme and Net Zero Bucks generated outstanding returns on investment. For every £1 invested, the Growth Programme delivered £6.65 in local economic value, while Net Zero Bucks delivered £4.13 per £1 invested—demonstrating the efficiency and high impact of BBF's interventions.

Community Projects

Buckinghamshire Business First led the research and development of the Buckinghamshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), having been chosen by the government as the official Employer Representative Body (ERB) for skills in the county. The LSIP is a multi-year plan that identifies where the most pressing skills shortages are within the local workforce and enables education and training providers to deliver post-16 technical education or training that directly addresses the priority areas and skills shortages identified.

Education & Teacher Encounters

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) plays a leading role in connecting education and industry across the county, helping to inspire, inform, and prepare the future workforce. Through direct initiatives and the work of the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub—a key part of the BBF Group and one of the country's top-

performing careers hubs—BBF has become a trusted partner to schools, colleges, employers, and learners of all ages.

BBF also empowers educators directly. Through the Teacher Encounters Programme, over 100 teachers in 2024/25 experienced local workplaces relevant to their subject areas. These immersive experiences help teachers contextualise their teaching and better guide students in making career choices.

Flagship Events & Careers Inspiration

Central to this work are large-scale events like the Bucks Skills Show, now attracting more than 7,000 visitors annually, including students, jobseekers, and career changers. Over 100 employers showcase a wide variety of career pathways at the show, which is attended by every secondary school and college in Buckinghamshire. The Confident Futures Skills Show further widens access to careers inspiration, creating a sensory-aware, inclusive environment for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), as well as adults facing significant employment barriers such as long-term unemployment, disability, homelessness, or refugee status.



The BBF Team at Hearing Dogs Saunderton Christmas event 2024

Bridging the Education Gap

BBF fosters strong ties between schools and industry through a network of 80+ Enterprise Advisers—professionals who volunteer and partner with schools to improve careers education and facilitate meaningful student-



employer engagement. Employers are also encouraged to contribute to the workforce pipeline through free work experience listings on the Bucks Skills Hub website.

Award-Winning Innovation

In October 2024, BBF's Bucks Skills Hub was awarded the Innovation in Education Award at the National Enterprise Network Awards for its Green Schools Challenge. This programme gives Year 12 students the chance to solve real-world environmental problems with mentorship from local businesses. Judges praised the initiative for developing enterprise and leadership skills while promoting sustainability and strengthening links between business and education.

Charitable Involvement

BBF partners closely with Heart of Bucks, a leading local grant-giving charity, to direct support where it is most impactful. As a Community Investor, BBF aligns with Heart of Bucks' mission and regional focus. In the 2024/25 financial year, this partnership contributed to £38,354 in grant funding across 10 projects, benefiting 12,385 individuals.

Pro Bono

BBF staff contribute significant time and expertise to local charitable and community groups without financial remuneration. Between 2022 and 2024, CEO Philippa Batting served on the board of Buckinghamshire Disability Service (BuDS). Additional examples of pro bono involvement include:

- Participation in the Heart of Bucks 'Vital Voices' forum.
- Representation on the Armed Forces Covenant steering group.
- Board membership on Opportunity Bucks.
- Contributions to the Disability Confident Employers Forum, Bucks Climate Action Alliance, and the Natural Environment Partnership.

Through the Enterprise Adviser network, BBF also facilitates approximately £384,000 worth of voluntary time annually to support local schools and students.

Fundraising

BBF raises funds for charitable causes through events and campaigns. Highlights include:

- Buckinghamshire Business Awards raffle: £2,024 raised in 2024, £1,585.20 in 2023, and £1,930 in 2022.
- Christmas donations: Annual £200 donation in lieu of cards, with recipients including Heart of Bucks and the Young Futures Fund.
- Food bank collections: 83.9kg of donations to One Can Trust in 2024; additional support to Aylesbury Foodbank and Wycombe Homeless Connection.

Future Initiatives

Over the coming years, BBF intends to place greater emphasis on evaluating the impact of the schools outreach initiatives through the Careers & Enterprise Company's (CEC) Employer Standards, to better understand and improve the effectiveness of the organisation's engagement with young people.

In parallel, the company is committed to increasing the uptake of meaningful work experience opportunities across the county, ensuring more students gain valuable insights into the world of work.

Additionally, BBF is exploring the development of new projects that support organisations in achieving their Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) objectives, using the TOMS (Themes, Outcomes, and Measures) framework to deliver measurable social value.

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.



BBF activities align with UN Sustainable Development Goals

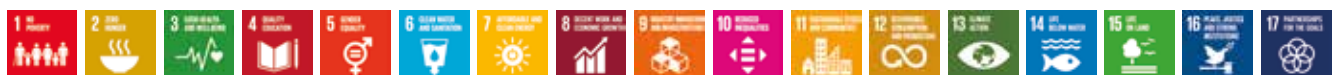
The UN SDGs are a call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognise that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social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

BBF activity aligns with the following SDGs.

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



All 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are;



Buckinghamshire Business First

have achieved Gold CSR Accreditation



UAC-CSRA-UK-06-25-BUCKINGHAMSH-G-9204

INITIAL ACCREDITATION DATE **30/04/2022** **GOLD**

RE-ACCREDITATION DATE **30/06/2025**

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

Buckinghamshire Business First

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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