



**15 November 2023**

<b>Title</b>	Reading Climate Festival 2023 Evaluation
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Donna Pentelow, Assistant Director of Culture and Peter Moore, Head of Climate Strategy
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Barnett-Ward, Lead Councillor for Leisure & Culture and Councillor Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Healthy Environment
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the committee note the evaluation of the 2023 Reading Climate Festival as outlined in Appendix 1 and recognise the efforts of the partners</li> <li>2. That the committee note the impact of Luke Jerram's Gaia on participation and engagement in Reading Climate Festival 2023.</li> <li>3. That the Committee note the value of arts, culture and creativity in engaging people in wider social issues (in this case, climate change)</li> </ol>

## **1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The 2023 Reading Climate Festival took place from 10-21 June with the stated aim of 'inspiring and encouraging positive action on climate change'. The first Reading Climate Festival, curated by the Reading Climate Action Network (RCAN) with support from a range of partners, including the Council, was held in November 2020. This inaugural Festival took the form of a series of on-line events necessitated by the pandemic restrictions in place at the time, with the centrepiece being the launch of the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25. The festival has been held annually since 2020, building a reputation and achieving good levels of participation of around 1000 participants a year. This is a good level of participation particularly in the context of the very limited resources available for its delivery.
- 1.2 The festival is run and curated by the Reading Climate Action Network (RCAN), the public-facing brand of the Reading Climate Change Partnership, a multi-agency partnership for which the Council acts as 'host' and accountable body.
- 1.3 In 2023 RCAN, the Council, the University of Reading and the Reading Economic & Development Agency (REDA) recognised the potential of a partnership approach to deliver against a number of shared objectives:
- to showcase the important role Reading has played on the world stage in understanding and addressing climate change;
  - to inform and engage the community about the work of RCAN/partner organisations in working towards a net-zero, climate resilient town by 2030;
  - to inspire and facilitate individuals/families to make clear pledges to adopt greener behaviours in support of our community's effort to address climate change.
- 1.4 The centrepiece of this vision was the exhibition of a major international artwork, Luke Jerram's Gaia, at Reading Town Hall engaging over 13,000 people over 20 events held

across Reading, attracting people from all parts of Reading and the UK. As well as engaging a wide range of people in conversations about climate change, the festival represented a significant cultural, educational and economic event for Reading as a whole. The costs of bringing Gaia to Reading were recovered through income, delivering high value at little or no cost to the public purse.

## **2 Policy Context**

- 2.1 Prior to the adoption of the national 'net zero by 2050' target, Reading Borough Council had declared a climate emergency at its meeting in February 2019, committing to the more ambitious aim of a net zero carbon Reading by 2030. In November 2020, the Council subsequently endorsed the new Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 (prepared by the Reading Climate Change Partnership) based on the 'net zero by 2030' ambition. The Climate Emergency Strategy recognises the importance of communicating and engaging with the residents and businesses of Reading to deliver this ambition. The Reading Climate Festival was developed as a vehicle to achieve this engagement.
- 2.2 This report covers the evaluation of the Reading Climate Festival 2023, its successes in continuing and growing the climate conversation, engaging new people in that conversation, nurturing strong sector wide partnerships and legacy.

## **3 Reading Climate Festival Evaluation Findings**

### **Context of the Reading Climate Festival**

- 3.1 The Reading Climate Festival was founded in 2020 by Reading Climate Action Network (Reading CAN), the public-facing 'brand' of the Reading Climate Change Partnership, a non-executive, multi-agency body for which the Council serves as 'host' and accountable body. The festival is aimed at helping individuals, communities and organisations understand how they can support Reading's commitment to being a net-zero, climate-resilient town by 2030 (as per the vision set out in the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy).
- 3.2 Since 2021 the festival has been held in association with the UK's Great Big Green Week, as aligning with this enabled external funding to be secured. It offers a series of free in-person and online events co-created with the community to inspire and encourage positive action on climate change.
- 3.3 The festival's strategic priorities are: to showcase the important role Reading has played on the world stage in understanding and addressing climate change; to inform and engage the community about the work of RCAN/partner organisations in working towards a net-zero, climate resilient town by 2030; to inspire and facilitate individuals/families to make clear pledges to adopt greener behaviours in support of our community's effort to address climate change.
- 3.4 To help realise these ambitions and given the ability of arts and culture to reach new audiences and be a vehicle to have wide ranging conversations, Luke Jerram's iconic artwork Gaia was brought to Reading Town Hall as a key focal point for the festival. To manage this event and the wider festival, we built on an existing strong working relationships established during the Year of Culture 2016 and subsequently built on between the University of Reading, REDA, the Reading BIDs, Reading Borough Council and RCAN. This partnership allowed us to share and increase resources to have a greater impact and reach.
- 3.5 Gaia was chosen as a unifying piece of artwork that met all partners' strategic priorities. It was a piece that spanned all our audiences, and which could very easily be linked to the climate narrative in a positive and informative way. It is also internationally known and drew people from other parts of the country.
- 3.6 Gaia was hosted at the Reading Concert Hall from the 10th to the 18th of June 2023. The partnership collaborated to deliver 57 public ticketed sessions, including 'Twilight'

(for evening sessions) and 'Relaxed' (aimed at neurodivergent audiences) events. Sessions were £2 per ticket for over 16s, under 16s were free. There were 10 curated events and 10 school sessions that sat alongside Gaia. An additional 19 events took place as part of the Reading Climate Festival programme.

### **Key Outcomes from the 2023 Reading Climate Festival**

3.7 Gaia as part of the Reading Climate Festival, helped engage new people in the climate conversation growing the audience by approximately 1,200% in one year. The combined cooperation and use of each partner's online resources meant that reaching a wider audience was possible. This event put Reading on the map and engaged Reading residents that may not have previously engaged in the festival.

- 12,000 people attended Gaia at the Reading Climate Festival, of which approximately 24% were from outside of the town. A further 1,300 attended other events at the festival.
- Together the partnership's social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn) impressions were 283,772. The Council's reach was 82,893. 100,000 people were reached via newsletters.
- Via the What'sOnReading.com website the Gaia webpage had 23,615 unique page views (16,649 Unique Users) from the 23rd of March to the 21st of June. This is an impressive number when compared to a Reading favourite, the annual Panto which had 52,049 unique page views (37,844 unique users) for the calendar year of 2022. In three months, Gaia received approximately 45% of the number that the panto got in the whole of 2022.
- The Committees from both Reading Central and Abbey Quarter Business Improvement Districts (BID), representing over 700 local businesses, voted unanimously to support the installation of Gaia.
- During the Gaia exhibition, the BID sponsored three separate events developed to engage the local businesses and their workforce: including a talk by bushcraft and survival expert, Ray Mears. This engaged with nearly 300 people from 100 local businesses.
- The festival enhanced Reading's sense of place and reinforced its identity as a place which is engaged with the climate change issue. In a post-event survey 90% of respondents who were from Reading said Gaia and the ancillary programme made them feel proud of the town.
- Climate anxiety is a growing concern in the UK, with 80% of those surveyed by Statista<sup>1</sup> having some concern about climate change. Many people report feeling daunted by the enormity of the problem, and by incorporating the RCAN Small Pledge initiative into the booking process we hoped to alleviate this sense of helplessness and give participants a sense of agency.
- 503 people responded to a post event survey, 25% of respondents were moved to join the climate action conversation as a result of seeing Gaia.
- The festival engaged young people: The Reading Museum Education Team and University of Reading managed the schools' outreach programme for Gaia engaging with 18 primary schools and 6 secondary schools. We first offered the opportunity to schools in the areas serving those in the most economically deprived areas of Reading. Of those that were invited 11 accepted. Together they reached over 600 school pupils and created online resources that will exist beyond the project.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/426733/united-kingdom-uk-concern-about-climate-change/>

### **3.8 Conclusions**

- 3.9 Using Gaia as the centrepiece of the 2023 Festival increased its reach to c13,000 people compared to previous festival audiences of c1,000, clearly demonstrating the potential of cultural events and the arts to attract new and different people to the climate change discussion.
- 3.10 The inclusion of Gaia in the festival also brought wider benefits to Reading in terms of pride in place, sense of place, partnership working, wider reputation and economic activity, although these have been more challenging to quantify.
- 3.11 Whilst the specific pledges made by participants may be relatively modest in number, the impact of a few can already be seen. For example, 83 households pledged to turn their heating down by 1 degree, this small change represents an approximate saving over 6.3 tons of CO2 emissions a year (full details can be found in the table in appendix one) which is roughly equivalent to the amount of carbon that 289 trees could absorb in a year. Moreover this is not the only measure of the success of the project: the ability to start climate conversations and get people thinking about, talking about and acting on climate change – which are inherently more difficult to measure - was where the real benefits lay.
- 3.12 Plans for the 2024 Reading Climate Festival, centred around Show Your Stripes Day on 21 June, are already in development with the same partners. The partnership is keen to build on the success of the 2023 festival and arts and culture will continue to feature strongly. Full legacy plan can be found in Appendix 1.

## **4 Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1 Involvement in the Reading Climate Festival supports the following RBC Corporate Plan strategic priorities:
- **Healthy Environment:** The Reading Climate Festival helps inform our community of the work that is happening locally to tackle climate change and how they can get involved with helping Reading reach a net zero carbon town by 2030.
  - **Thriving Communities:** Many of the events help inform residents of how to reduce their carbon footprint but also their household bills in the process.
  - **Inclusive Economy:** The festival brought people in from outside of Reading, enhancing our tourism offering. Engaged young people in the conversation and addressed climate anxiety.

## **5 Environmental and Climate Implications**

- 5.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). Although there are no direct climate implications arising from the recommendations in this report, a Climate Impact Assessment has been completed which suggests that the Festival as a whole is likely to have delivered a 'medium positive' impact, based on the significantly increased levels of engagement achieved compared to previous climate festivals.

## **6 Community Engagement**

- 6.1 The evaluation of this project was carried out by Reading Museum volunteers and a post event survey sent out by the Reading Arts and RCAN Team. The responses from audience members and participants formed the basis of this evaluation.
- 6.2 Reading's Youth Council rep for Climate Change was part of the festival's steering group, helping shape the programme and offered feedback on youth engagement.
- 6.3 Work was undertaken with schools from across Reading to engage them in a school's climate summit on Show your Stripes Day.

## **7 Equality Implications**

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report. Efforts were made, however, in the planning and delivery of the Festival to ensure that it was accessible to all and as inclusive as possible by making almost all events free, offering a balance of online and 'in person' events, promoting events via a diverse range of channels, and keeping ticket prices for Gaia at the minimum level required to cover costs.

## **8 Other Relevant Considerations**

- 8.1 None to report.

## **9 Legal Implications**

- 9.1 None to report.

## **10 Financial Implications**

- 10.1 The costs of bringing Gaia to Reading were recovered through ticket income and joint investment from the partners therefore delivering high value at no cost to the public purse. The total cost of the bringing Gaia to Reading was £47,270, all of which was covered through sponsorship from partner organisations (£20,657), UK Shared Prosperity Funding (£10,969) and ticket income (£15,642).

## **11 Timetable for Implementation**

- 11.1 N/A

## **12 Background Papers**

- 12.1 There are none.

## **Appendices**

1. **Gaia Evaluation Report**

# Appendix 1 – Gaia Final Report

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## Introduction

In 2023 The Reading Climate Festival was in its fourth year. Over the previous three years it had enjoyed a good level of support from community as well as business organisations. This year there was an opportunity to further grow the festival and extend its reach and therefore impact, by bringing Luke Jerram’s Gaia to the Town Hall. It was for this purpose that Reading Borough Council, University of Reading, the Reading BIDs and the Reading Climate Action Network (ReadingCAN) Reading Climate Festival came together.

Through this collaboration, there was the opportunity to work together to programme activity around Gaia in the town hall, jointly raise funding, work through each other’s communications networks, share resources and amplify messaging.

### Aim of the Reading Climate Festival

Luke Jerram’s Gaia was held as part of the Reading Climate Festival. The Festival is held in association with the UK’s Great Big Green Week and with the support of Reading’s Economic and Destination Agency. Reading Climate Festival offers a series of free in-person and online events to inspire and encourage positive action on climate change.

Founded and curated by [Reading Climate Action Network](#) (ReadingCAN), the festival is aimed at helping individuals, communities and organisations understand how they can support Reading’s commitment to being a net-zero, climate-resilient town by 2030.

## Gaia

Gaia was hosted at the Reading Town Hall, in the Concert Hall from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2023. The partnership collaborated to deliver 57 public tickets sessions, including Twilight (for late night sessions) and Relaxed (aimed at neurodivergent audiences) events, these sessions were £2 per ticket for over 16s, under 16s were free. There were 10 curated events and 10 school sessions that sat alongside Gaia. An additional 19 events took place as part of the Reading Climate Festival programme.

## The Purpose

The purpose of the Gaia Exhibition was to deliver against jointly agreed strategic priorities. These included:

1. To showcase the important role Reading has played on the world stage in understanding and addressing climate change.
2. To inform and engage the community about work of RCAN/partner organisations in working towards a net zero, climate resilient town by 2030.
3. To inspire and facilitate individuals/families to make clear pledges to adopt greener behaviours in support of our community's effort to address climate change.

Evaluation of the event was carried out to understand whether this event met these targets. The results of the evaluation are discussed below.

## Why Culture and Creativity as a vehicle?

*'A key challenge is that climate change is an unprecedented 'collective action problem that requires agreement, collaboration and shared action among people and organisations that may not normally collaborate...decisions on climate action taken by organisations, communities and individuals will often depend not only on a factual understanding of climate change but the underlying personal values, social and cultural norms, and ability to adapt.'*<sup>2</sup>

*For this reason there is a growing recognition that climate change constitutes not only an environmental and scientific challenge but a cultural challenge, and that there is a need to make climate change and climate action more meaningful and personally relevant...'<sup>2</sup>*

Because Climate Action and engagement in the Climate Conversation is such a personal journey we need to consider *'other methods of engagement beyond the presentation of scientific facts.'*<sup>3</sup>

Culture is a powerful *'conduit for public engagement'* and the artists and practitioners are *'agents of change'*<sup>4</sup> helping us envision a climate resilient future, galvanising people towards shared goals of planetary balance. Over the years, culture and these agents of change have played a key role in catalysing social and political change.

Culture, Art, and Creativity is a proven way to support people's understanding of the natural world, making complicated and sometimes anxiety inducing topics accessible, driving understanding and starting important conversations. It can also support change in behaviours and help people make changes in their lives that will help benefit the bigger picture.

We understand that big changes are needed to truly tackle this challenge that we are all now facing, however, every journey starts with a first step, and that first step cannot be a leap, it needs to feel achievable, manageable and have a measurable change. The aim is to engage those who have traditionally disengaged, give confidence to those who are inactive but want to engage and further

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<sup>2</sup> [12. engaging-the-public-on-climate-change.pdf | Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(unesco.org\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [12. engaging-the-public-on-climate-change.pdf | Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(unesco.org\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [What does climate action look like for the Culture and Creative Sector Industries? - Climate-KIC](#)

direct those who are already comfortable with the climate change topic. Culture and creativity can help bridge the gap between all three of these audiences.

## Why Gaia?

*'Fascinating view of earth. It (Gaia) made me think about how beautiful the earth is and why we should protect it.'* Gaia Attendee

Gaia was chosen as a unifying piece of artwork that met all partners' strategic priorities. It was a piece that spanned all our audiences, and its main purpose was not a climate story but one that could very easily be linked to that narrative in a positive and informative way. It is also a piece that is internationally known and will draw people from other parts of the country.

*For many people, taking action against climate change feels like an almost unbearable task, facing them too late and with too few options of attack.<sup>5</sup>*

At a time when many people are experiencing stress as a result of our 'anxiety-provoking culture'<sup>6</sup>, and two thirds of Britons are experiencing eco anxiety, this is a more gentle 'nudge theory' approach to the Climate Crisis that evokes the Overview Effect<sup>7</sup>.

*'I thought the exhibit was quite profound, making me feel in awe of the world and also protective towards the planet. Both good things.'* Gaia Attendee

The piece was installed and supported with a view to engaging new people in the conversation and offering possibilities to a situation that can feel quite hopeless.

## Putting Reading on the Map

Showcasing the important role Reading has played on the world stage in understanding and addressing climate change.

Gaia helped further highlight Reading as a place that leads on sustainable best practice and spread the word about the ongoing good work that partners are doing to help combat climate change.

The University of Reading collaborated with partners to create a complimentary exhibition, celebrating the work that the partners are doing on a local, national and international stage to combat climate change, but also to promote ways in which people can get involved with climate action.

## Reach of the event

12,000 people viewed this exhibition and Gaia, of which approximately 24% were from outside of the town.

*'Inspiring and amazing to have this iconic piece of art in Reading.'* Gaia Attendee

The collaboration helped extend the reach beyond the realms of each individual organisation, further helping to amplify key climate messaging. Together our social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn) impressions were 283,772 and our reach was 82,893.

We communicated directly through newsletters with over 100,000 people from our local community of students, businesses and residents.

Via the What's On website the Gaia webpage had 23,615 unique page views (16,649 Unique Users) from the 23 March to the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, this is an impressive number when compared to a Reading

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<sup>5</sup> [Why It's Hard to Stay Motivated in the Fight Against Climate Change \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/why-it-s-hard-to-stay-motivated-in-the-fight-against-climate-change-2786187)

<sup>6</sup> [NOTES ON A NERVOUS PLANET | Kirkus Reviews](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Overview effect - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overview_effect)



favourite, the Panto which got 52,049 unique page views (37,844 unique users) for the calendar year of 2022.

In three months, Gaia got approximately 45% of the number that the panto got in the whole of 2022.

Local and regional media outlets supported the event, a selection of links to the news articles can be found below:

- <https://rdg.today/gaia-unveiled-in-reading-as-the-climate-festival-gets-underway> and news features can be found below.
- <https://planetradio.co.uk/greatest-hits/berkshire-north-hampshire/news/gaia-art-work-reading/>

It was also covered by ITV Meridian and local radio stations, including BBC Radio Berkshire and Planet Radio.

Gaia was also advertised through the Great West Way and via the GWR networks.

### Enhancing Reading's Sense of Place

Pride in place is 'the emotional bond between people and place.'<sup>8</sup> A sense of place is important for a town, it develops a sense of community and belonging. On the surface this would seem like an arbitrary need, especially in the context of Climate Change.

However, research into developing a locality's sense of place can '*Influence our well-being, how we describe and interact with a place, what we value in a place, our respect for ecosystems and other species, how we perceive the affordances of a place, our desire to build more sustainable and just urban communities, and how we choose to improve cities.*'<sup>9</sup>

*Sense of place plays a key role in predicting and promoting public support for conservation in diverse socioecological contexts.*<sup>10</sup>

Although our evaluation was not in-depth enough to explore some of the above outcomes in more detail, we were able to do some high-level research in Pride of Place, which is the emotional connection one feels towards the town they live in. We recognise that more research would need to be done to irrefutably demonstrate the connection between the two concepts. That being said, 90% of those who were from Reading said Gaia and the ancillary programme made them feel proud of the town.

From a partnership point of view, the nature of this event attracted high-profile names in support of the programme. This confidence led to MP Alok Sharma, President of COP26 climate talks, TV weather presenter Laura Tobin, broadcaster Ray Mears and others speaking as part of the programme of events.

Feedback from the project team was that Gaia brought a sense of occasion, similar to the one that is brought about by large festivals. That sense of occasion afforded all partners the confidence to work together to amplify joint messaging and leverage in contacts that may not normally have engaged with this work.

### Engaging people in the conversation

To inform and engage the community about work of RCAN/partner organisations in working towards a net zero, climate resilient town by 2030.

In Reading, 'Action on Climate Change' was given the second highest level of dissatisfaction and the second lowest level of satisfaction from people who responded to the Residents' Survey.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [Townscapes: Pride in Place | Resources | High Street Task Force \(highstreettaskforce.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Sense of Place – The Nature of Cities](#)

<sup>10</sup> [The ecosystem service of sense of place: benefits for human well-being and biodiversity conservation | Environmental Conservation | Cambridge Core](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Appendix 12 - Summary of the Results of the Residents Survey 2022.pdf \(reading.gov.uk\)](#)

Nationally,

- 70% of British people want politicians to take urgent action to tackle climate change <sup>12</sup>
- UK wide, two thirds of people are experiencing eco-anxiety and 80% of those surveyed by Statista had some concern about climate change<sup>13</sup>.
- 80% of those surveyed across 17 developed economies said they were willing to make a change to help combat climate change. <sup>14</sup>
- 73% said they were willing to take personal action to help protect our planet

Engaging our communities in the climate conversation, supporting their climate action journey and promoting the work that the partners are doing to combat climate change will help alleviate some of the concerns felt by local residents thereby supporting people's mental wellbeing and sense of agency.

Engaging people in the conversation:

- 12,000 people attended Gaia and the ancillary events curated by the partners, which compares to c.1000 at previous Reading Climate Festivals
- 503 people responded to a post event survey, of those who responded 82% gave the event a 4 star or more
- 25% of respondents were moved to join the climate action conversation as a result of seeing Gaia
- The Committees from both Reading Central and Abbey Quarter Business Improvement Districts (BID), representing over 700 local businesses, voted unanimously to support the installation of Gaia.
- During the installation the BID sponsored three separate events developed to engage the local businesses and workforce. This engaged with nearly 300 people from 100 local businesses.

Engaging new people in the conversation:

A link to where bookers were from in Reading can be found [here](#). This spread of bookers' locations will serve as a benchmark for future events. As can be seen from the map the majority of bookers were from Reading, with the furthest booking being from Australia. Although our aim is to ensure that the climate conversation reaches as many people as possible we do understand that with the cost-of-living crisis and the pressures that people are facing in some of our most economically deprived areas of Reading, that climate action may not be the top of their priorities.

When engaging people in the climate conversation, the primary aim of doing this is ensuring that the conversation is relevant and applicable to their circumstances, and it is possible for them to take part in the conversation without bias or barriers.

In order to do this we employed key principles for the event:

- Making it accessible
  - Low cost or free
  - Accessible events for neurodivergent people
  - Additional support for blind and hard of hearing people
- Not only about the science
  - The event could be engaged with both from a scientific and a pure enjoyment perspective
- Family friendly

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/01/18/two-thirds-of-brits-are-struggling-with-climate-anxiety-heres-what-you-can-do-about-it>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/426733/united-kingdom-uk-concern-about-climate-change/>

<sup>14</sup> [Climate Change Concerns Make Many Around the World Willing to Alter How They Live and Work | Pew Research Center](#)

- This event was about bringing all generations together to experience as individuals or together
- Manageable changes
  - Small pledges

## Engaging Young People

*‘The climate crisis is taking a growing toll on the mental health of children and young people...eco-anxiety “risks exacerbating health and social inequalities between those more or less vulnerable to these psychological impacts”... Although not yet considered a diagnosable condition, recognition of eco-anxiety and its complex psychological effects was increasing, they said, as was its “disproportionate” impact on children and young people.*

*...a 2020 survey of child psychiatrists in England showing that more than half (57%) are seeing children and young people distressed about the climate crisis and the state of the environment.’<sup>15</sup>*

At a local level, No5 Young People’s Counselling found that eco anxiety was the second biggest concern that young people are facing, but that concern is not being expressed in counselling sessions. There are a number of hypotheses as to why this might be the case, one of the beliefs is that this may be around the lack of language to express this concern, work is ongoing to address this.

Through this project the aim was to demonstrate the power of creativity and culture in the context of the school curriculum to support education, engagement and agency around climate action and change.

The Museum Education Team and University managed the schools’ outreach programme for Gaia. Through this programme they engaged with 18 primary schools and 6 secondary schools. First offering the opportunity to schools in the areas serving those in the most economically deprived of Reading.

Together they reach over 600 school pupils and created online resources that will exist beyond the project.

They gave young people the agency to discuss climate action and climate change in a safe environment.

Primary school students were asked two questions after the Gaia viewing:

Question 1: why is Nature important and why should we protect it?

Question 2: What can I do to protect the environment?

They wrote their answers to the first question on flower-shaped post-its which were pinned at the base of a tree to create a visual natural environment for it.

Then they wrote their answers to the second question on leaf-shaped post-its which were pinned to the branches of the trees to show how their efforts and pledges can bring the tree back to life.

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<sup>15</sup> [‘Eco-anxiety’: fear of environmental doom weighs on young people | Anxiety | The Guardian](#)



This feedback will be used to inform future work at the Museum and also help create further resources.

Feedback from the schools:

**English Martyrs:**

*"(the session leader) was wonderful- meeting us outside and helping to get us organised. She gave us a lot of information and answered the children's questions with enthusiasm. Our Eco-team at school loved this experience. Having written activities was also great to help children stay focused on "doing"."*

**Caversham Primary:**

*"The exhibition was amazing and the session questions had obviously been well thought out and considered. Having three groups in the room at the same time didn't work very well though - we had the quietest guide and we couldn't hear her but could hear the other two guides very loudly. Also, it all seemed a bit rushed - the children didn't have time to just look at the globe and I think there was a wasted opportunity not to go up to the second storey of the hall to look at the amazing exhibit from a different point of view."*

**Hemdean House:**

*"This was a unique opportunity for the children and they all found it fascinating. Could have been a little longer."*

**New Christ Church Primary:**

*"My class had a brilliant time, the teacher was fantastic and responded so well to the class".*

## Feeling empowered and Taking Action

Inspire and facilitate individuals/families to make clear pledges to adopt greener behaviours in support of our communities' efforts to address climate change.

*"Fear of the unknown and fear of not having control may contribute to people who feel stuck," says Gulotta. "Taking small steps in a way that makes them feel they are in control of their own actions may make them feel less stressed and less fearful."<sup>16</sup>*

Through this programme over 100 people signed up to the RCAN Climate Pledge. Although a small proportion of those who visited, it is a good start. As a partnership we will be aiming to develop this scheme and support people to continue their climate journey.

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<sup>16</sup> [Why It's Hard to Stay Motivated in the Fight Against Climate Change \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/why-it-s-hard-to-stay-motivated-in-the-fight-against-climate-change-2786187)

The 15 options that are offered to those signing up are mostly measurable. The impact from these small changes is listed below and will be shared with the developing community that RCAN is creating – through their mailing list growth campaign among other things – to help spur people on and build confidence around engaging in climate action.

Pledge	Number Assumptions: Each person is responsible for a household	Possible Impact**
Turn heating down by 1c	83	Approximate saving of 1530kw a year per household and 10-13% on their bills. Total: 1530kw x 83 households = 126,990 kw Approximate Carbon Saving of 126,990 kw x 50g Co2 <sup>17</sup> emissions per kwh = <b>6,349,500g</b> Co2 emissions
Switching appliances off at the wall	70	<sup>18</sup> Average saving per household of £60/45kgCO2e p.a. by switching off at the wall. This would equate to: 45kg x 70 households = 3150Co2 Kg savings a year
Take a shower instead of a bath	79	Taking a shower every day instead of a bath every day, saves a person 3650 gallons a year. 3650gallons x 79 = 288,350 gallons a year saving <sup>19</sup>
Wash clothes at 30c and only a full load	75	Approximately £13 saving a year per household
Tap water only and use reusable bottle	84	Carbon footprint of making a plastic bottle of water approx. 82.9g of Co2 <sup>20</sup> and 5.3litres of water <sup>21</sup> Assumption that people may buy 3 bottles of water a month. (3*12)*84= 3024 bottles of water saved 3024 * 82.9g Co2 =251,000 3024*5.3litres = 16000 litres
Eat local and mainly vegetable based diet	71	1 vegetarian day per week (52 days a year) can save nearly 100kgs of CO2 per year.

<sup>17</sup> [Carbon Dioxide Emissions From Electricity - World Nuclear Association \(world-nuclear.org\)](http://world-nuclear.org)

<sup>18</sup> [Guide to choosing home appliances - Energy Saving Trust](#)

<sup>19</sup> [How Much Money Can You Save a Year by Taking a Shower Instead of a Bath? | Budgeting Money - The Nest](#)

<sup>20</sup> [What Is the Carbon Footprint of a Plastic Bottle? | Sciencing](#)

<sup>21</sup> [The Water Footprint of Your Plastic Bottle - FoodPrint](#)

		1 vegetarian week per month (12 weeks a year) can save nearly 153kgs of CO2 per year. 1 vegan day per week (52 days a year) can save nearly 143kgs of CO2 per year. 1 vegan week per month (12 weeks a year) can save nearly 231kgs of CO2 per year. <sup>22</sup>
Change supplier to a sustainable energy supplier	80	Each household could save approximately 1 tonne of CO2 per year by switching <sup>23</sup>
Recycle	84	You could save approximately 61kg a month of CO2 <sup>24</sup>
Walk, cycle or scoot to the shops and short journeys	70	Those who switch just one trip per day from car driving to cycling reduce their carbon footprint by about 0.5 tonnes over a year, representing a substantial share of average per capita <sup>25</sup> CO2 emissions <a href="#">Introducing our new carbon calculator (stepcount.org.uk)</a>
Avoid fast fashion	80	<a href="#">Recycling Carbon Footprint Savings Calculator [2023] (recyclewits.com)</a>
Buy products without plastic	82	On average people produce 68 pounds of plastic waste per year. For every 1lb of plastic waste it creates 3lbs of Co2 during the manufacturing process. Therefore 68lbs x 3= 204lbs of Co2 per person $204\text{lbs} \times 82 = 16,728$ <sup>2627</sup>
Write to MP about Climate Change	48	<a href="#">Why it's worth contacting your MP about the environment – even if they don't seem to care   Greenpeace UK</a>
Use Ecosia	47	Reading specific link for Reading Residents to use - <a href="https://ecosia.co/readingplantstreets">https://ecosia.co/readingplantstreets</a>
Find out more about RCAN and local work	68	

<sup>22</sup> [How much carbon could you save by going veggie or vegan every so often? - Exeter City Council News](#)

<sup>23</sup>

[Everything You Need To Know About Switching To A Sustainable Energy Supplier | HuffPost UK Tech \(huffingtonpost.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Recycling Carbon Footprint Savings Calculator \[2023\] \(recyclewits.com\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Ditching the car for walking or biking just one day a week cuts carbon footprint | Imperial News | Imperial College London](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Food Packaging Waste Statistics: Understanding the Rise of Food Packaging Waste - Environment Co](#)

<sup>27</sup> [How Much Plastic Does One Person Use in a Day? - Naturaler](#)

\*\* We understand that exact calculations can be very difficult to ascertain, however, every effort has been made to use reputable sources to come to an informed possible impact of the pledges.

## Conclusions

- By increasing the reach of the Festival to c13,000 people compared to previous Festival audiences of c1,000, using Gaia as the centrepiece of the 2023 Festival clearly demonstrated the potential of cultural events and the arts to attract new and different people to the climate change discussion
- The inclusion of Gaia in the Festival also brought wider benefits to the town in terms of pride in place, partnership working, wider reputation and economic activity
- Whilst the specific pledges made by participants may be relatively modest in number, the impact of a few can already be seen, moreover this is not the only measure of the success of the project: the ability to start climate conversations and get people thinking about, talking about and acting on climate change – which are inherently more difficult to measure - was where the real benefits lay

## Legacy from the project

-see the benefits of engaging in art to start and continue important conversations

- engaging new audiences

Target	How	Lead(s)
Continue to build and develop the partnership created through Reading Climate Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the steering group on a quarterly basis for the Climate Festival and collaborate on future Climate Festival projects</li> <li>• Rotate Chairs to ensure that each organisation has equal engagement in the project</li> <li>• Develop a Terms of Reference for the Steering Group</li> <li>• Agree a JD for Chair and Co-Chair</li> </ul>	RBC, UoR, BID, RCAN, Reading Youth Council
Jointly curate a headline programme of creative/cultural-events or a creative/cultural event for future Reading Climate Festivals, as well as a programme of action-oriented hybrid events focused on supporting the objectives of Reading's climate strategy	Agree a timeline for sign off	
Evaluation of each programme to ensure that it fits with the strategic priorities of each of the partners	A jointly penned and agreed informal partnership understanding	

Continue to support the development of the pledges initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jointly work to encourage pledging sign- up</li> <li>• Continually develop the initiative to ensure that it meets with the strategic priorities of Reading</li> </ul>	
Continue to advocate for young people's mental wellbeing in the context of eco-anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allyship training</li> <li>• Eco-anxiety training</li> <li>• Engage young people in the climate festival</li> </ul>	