September 2023
Annual Report

The One Planet Abingdon Climate Emergency Centre is an inspirational community hub run by volunteers, for the benefit of the people and the planet - building resilience in a climate emergency, right in the centre of Abingdon-on-Thames.

Mission

To make the Climate Emergency Centre a space where the magic happens; connecting and supporting our community to change lifestyles and reduce our carbon footprint, whilst addressing issues of social injustice and inequality to build resilience and cohesion.

Vision

To help to create a 'one planet' Abingdon where everyone in the town works together towards living within the earth's resources and repairing the damage done, whilst enjoying happy, healthy lives and leaving ample space for nature to thrive and flourish.

Purpose

To provide a vibrant community place where people can come together to promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical, natural and social environments in the town of Abingdon for the public benefit of its residents and the wider community.

To build community ties by working collaboratively with local groups and individuals, learning with and from the public, local business and other local bodies on the impact and mitigation of, as well as adaptation to climate, ecological and social challenges.

To develop understanding and create a sense of purpose to act on the climate, ecological and social issues that affect us all in order to deliver positive changes within our lives and in the town of Abingdon leading to a sustainable, enjoyable and positive future.

Youth 📢 ***Outreach*** 📢 ***Council Relations*** 📢

Reflections from the Chair



It is likely that 2023 will be the warmest year globally within the historical temperature record, reflecting a hot summer in the northern hemisphere and established El Nino conditions in the tropical Pacific. The past few months have been marked by climate emergencies affecting every continent and threatening the lives of millions of people.
Other significant climate-related events in 2023 include record high global ocean temperatures, unprecedented low sea ice extent in the Antarctic winter and accelerating atmospheric levels of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

Looking ahead, the estimated carbon budget for keeping the increase in temperature to 1.5° C (the 2015 Paris agreement) will run out before 2030 unless all developed countries make further substantial and rapid cuts to their greenhouse gas emissions. However, we do have the scientific and technological knowledge to achieve this, and the rate of increase of CO2 in the atmosphere shows signs of slowing down as renewable energy sources replace the burning of fossil fuels, in particular coal.

We know that early action to reduce further heating of the globe will cost less and cause less environmental damage than delaying until there is no choice. So why do nations, corporations, institutions and people not commit fully to decarbonisation for the benefit of everyone including themselves? In this context any proposal to open new coal mines and issuing new licenses to drill for gas and oil seems criminal.

The UK has cut its territorial emissions of CO2 since 1990 through investment into renewable energy, especially offshore wind, and through more efficient use of energy. However, we have become increasingly reliant on imported manufactured goods, and once the associated production and transport emissions are accounted for, UK citizens still have an average carbon footprint well above the global mean.

A recent report of the Climate Change Committee (Progress in reducing emissions, 2023 Report to Parliament) is very critical of the UK government; one conclusion is that ‘It is essential that policies to empower and support people to make low-carbon lifestyle choices are implemented now’.

Generic issues for Abingdon are the continued building of substandard new houses with respect to CO 2 emissions and the increasing car traffic within the town centre. The government 'cutting of green crap' in the early 2010s has led to increased dependence on gas imports, higher energy costs for everyone, and a lack of expertise for retrofitting work such as the installation of heat pumps. The high level of car use seems related in part to single-person commuting and to the private transport of children to school and is more difficult to resolve.

More specifically, improved public understanding is needed about the immediacy of climate change, about the meaning and ways of achieving net zero and about how individuals can decrease their carbon footprint significantly. Ensuring everyone has the resources to make sound green decisions can probably only be achieved through greater financial equity or a 'levelling down' of wealth and income. This principle is fundamental to climate justice and is equally applicable to our relationship with poorer countries in the context of a need to reduce large scale migration of people.

A report by the British Science Association, entitled Climate change in secondary schools: young people's views of climate change and sustainability education, published in June 2023, concludes that the education of 14 to 18 year olds in climate change 'is not solution-based and does not equip them with the skills needed to tackle future impacts of the climate crisis'. Schools probably lack the resources and time within their curriculum-driven timetables to meet this significant challenge.

In response to these two reports, how can OPACEC help beyond work already being undertaken within the Bioregional 'One Planet Living' framework? Possibilities include informal discussions about the climate emergency on topics suggested by members, up-to-date talks and films on the science and predicted impacts of climate change, support for a climate change assembly, and discussions with secondary school teachers about ways of providing students with a better understanding of how the challenges of climate change will be met.

Patrick Holligan
Chair

Key indicators

August 2022 - August 2023



Visitors to the CEC

4805 almost double the number of last year!

Volunteers

55 active



Steering Group Members

14

Regular Days Open

4 per week including most Sundays!

Licence agreed to **2028**!

Abingdon Town Council supports us with free use of the space for another 5 years!

Fundraising

Rent and Services:

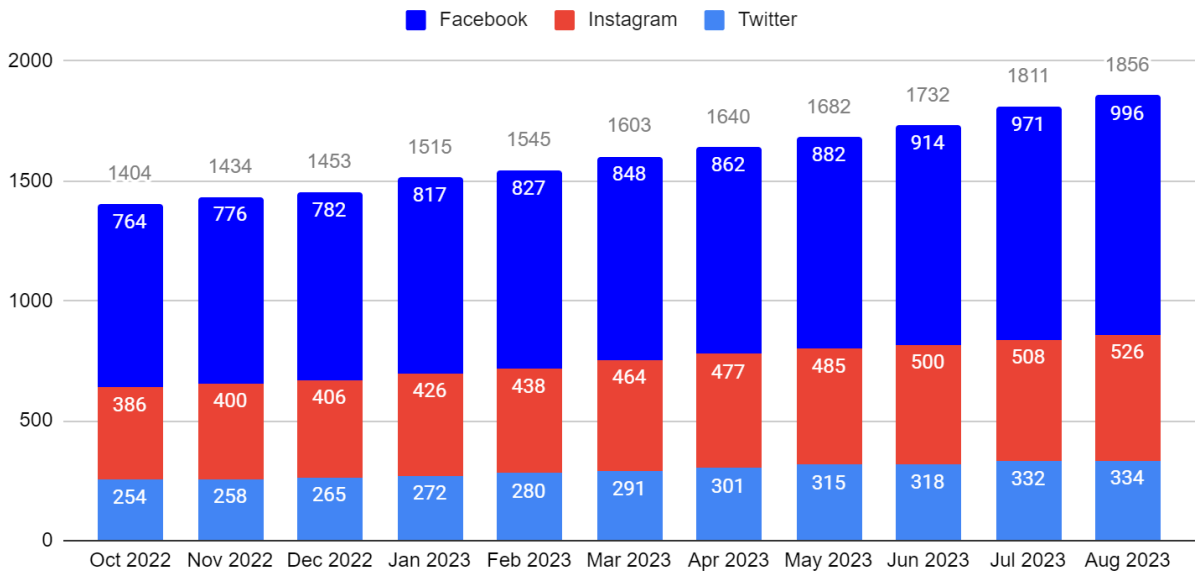
- Abingdon Town Council covers the rent and services which is valued at £7000 pa.

Projects funded:

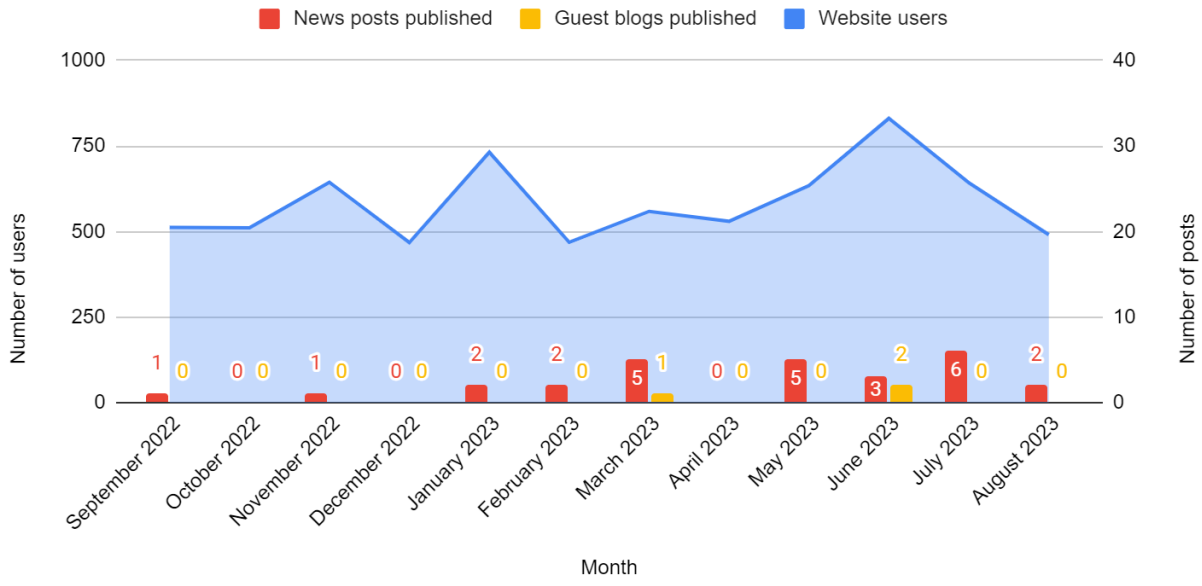
- We were successful in a bid for working with young people. Christ's Hospital of Abingdon has kindly granted us £8604 to do the important work of youth engagement.
- We were successful in our bid for funds from the VOWH Climate Action Fund in order to run a Fresh Water Watch project - £2000. We currently have 8 teams monitoring fresh water spaces in our town.

Social Media presence

One Planet Abingdon is active on Facebook, Instagram (2 accounts: 1 general and 1 youth) and Twitter.

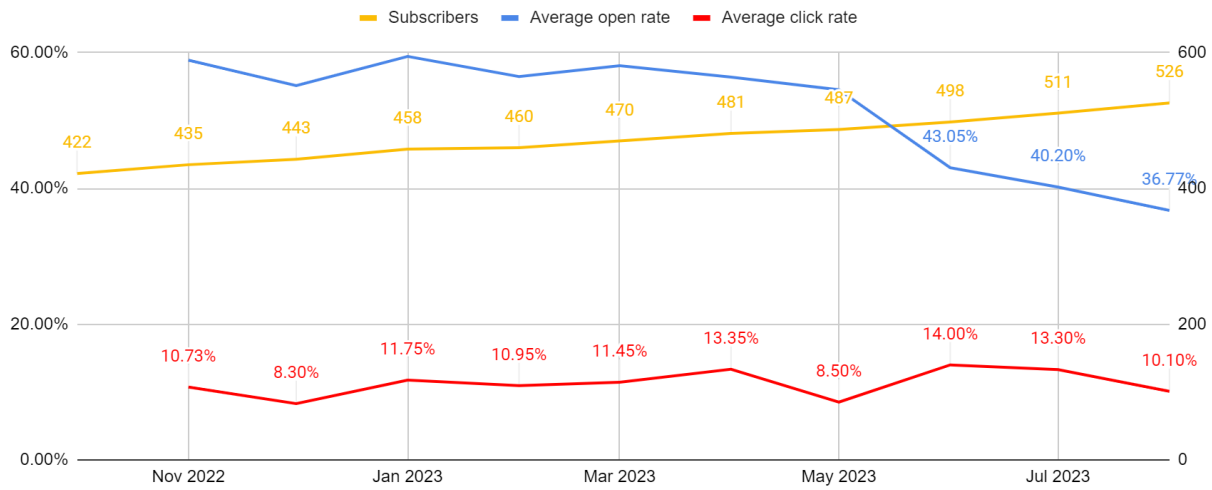


Website



Mailing list

We send two “Latest News & Upcoming events” emails on average per month.
Managed via Mailchimp until June 2023, then moved to MailPoet (hence the open rate dropping as the platforms measure engagement differently).



Diversity (not officially recorded)

This is a sensitive area and by sharing this information we hope to improve accessibility and inclusivity to all the people of Abingdon by stating that everyone is welcome.

Age - Youngest supporter actively involved is 10 and oldest is 91 years old

Gender and sexuality - we have the support of the LGBTQ+ community, and we are doing what we can to support these groups too!

We have continued our engagement with the social prescriber in order to offer a service to patients with mental health and association challenges.

We sell nothing - it is all by donation to ensure that we are accessible to everyone.

It is important to us that everyone feels welcome in the space.



Race/culture/origin






We had a week of events in support of the national Refugee Week culminating in a community lunch in the centre sponsored by One Planet Abingdon. The week was only possible due to collaborations with a variety of new individuals for which we are very grateful. We hope to do more with these wonderful supporters in the future. Special thanks to Laurence Nagy Yoga, Charlotte Storrs Ceramics, Lisa, April, Deborah and Henna at Planted Plates, to mention a few. It was well attended and many new relationships have been forged.



We have welcomed visitors in for a cuppa from Ireland, Italy, South Africa, Zimbabwe, France, Australia, Peru, Spain, America, Canada and New Zealand. They are always amazed and say that they will share the good work we are doing and would like the same where they live!



During this year essential maintenance work was done on the lift and it is now back in operation. We are very grateful to the Museum for this to ensure that we can accommodate the visitors requiring assistance due to disability & lack of mobility as well as making it easier for mums with buggies.



"Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists, it is making a new space, a better space for everyone."

Activities for our second year of operation

229 Eco events in the centre, held within the 10 Principles of One Planet Living, the framework which underpins all we do.

Including:

- 📚Walking and Book Festivals
- 🍏 Apple Pressing
- 🧵 Make and Mend
- 🔧 Repair Cafes
- 🧶 Learn to knit
- 🎶 Fun with Music for kids
- 👑 Learn to play chess sessions
- 👚 Teenage Clothes Swaps
- 👗 Swish
- 🎀 Natural Wreath Making
- 🚲 Bike Checks & workshop
- 🌱 Plant Swaps
- 🥗Salad and Chat
- ✂️ Eco crafting for kids
- 🧶Sunday Crafternoons
- 🍆Vegan Tasting Plates
- 🥘Planted Plates Pop ups
- 📖 Storytime
- 📽️ Film Screenings
- 🗣️Climate Conversations
- 🖼️ Art Exhibitions
- ♻️ Upcycling Workshops

















4 Special Events held

Celebration of 5 yr licence Extension (March 2023)





Abingdon Town Council voted to sign a new 5-year licence for us to stay in the old Mousehole Cafe premises, which meant that our future has been secured for at least the next 5 years. As this was such wonderful news we decided to have a full day of celebration on Saturday 18th March. The Mayor, Lord Lieutenant and other dignitaries were present. Beautiful words were spoken, lots of praise received, our young people representing us so well… We have a bright future to look forward to at OPACEC, the commitment, hard work and passion will hold us in good stead as we continue doing all we can to create a One Planet Abingdon, where we all live happy healthy lives within the resources of our one beautiful planet!

Eco Fair (May 2023)



The focus of the Eco Fair was to engage with businesses in our community in order to showcase their sustainable solutions and options as well as to introduce the people of Abingdon to the amazing options that we have on our doorstep.

Funding was used from the grant gratefully received by Bioregional in 2022 as well as some of the funding received from the Knowledge to Action grant received by the Vale of White Horse District council.

The event was a collaboration between One Planet Living Climate Emergency Centre with Abingdon Carbon Cutters, Oxfordshire GreenTech, South and Vale Business Support Team and Abingdon Events Partnership.

Exhibiting organisations were checked to ensure they fit with the aims and ethos of the Eco-Fair and the opportunity was taken to engage with the business community on the One Planet Living framework (OPL). 23 Organisations supported the event which was a wonderful success. Residents were able to ask questions and there were many discussions about the climate crisis and how individuals and businesses could respond. We are hoping to make this an annual event.

Summer Camp (August 2023)

The Summer Camp was over the Bank holiday week and was a collaboration with Peace EducationUK. It was a pilot event and we are very happy with how it unfolded - the children had a wonderful time learning about themselves as part of the system that is nature…

Concepts such as peace and nature were carefully explained throughout the week and sharing, helping, being more tolerant, explaining emotions were all part of the learning. The final day was celebrated with a delicious lunch which the children helped to prepare followed by presentations to their parents.

A few of the many comments received:



' I wanted to thank you for the wonderful week you planned with the children. I appreciate all the time and effort that went into this, he enjoyed his time at One Planet Abingdon. We spent the last day at home elaborating on our sustainability plan with him.'



Another comment: *'in the car on the way home we have started to have interesting discussions about concepts that we have never discussed before… their eyes have been opened to so much more! Thank you.'*

'They've been so quiet and thoughtful! Not sure what you have done - but we're loving it!'

















Film screenings



The screening of the film, Finite – the climate of change was a wonderful collaboration between the Abbey Cinema's Sue Wiper, One Planet Abingdon, and Director, Rich Felgate. We are grateful to them for this opportunity to spread the message.

It was a well attended event with 100 in the cinema. The film was well received and successful in evoking discussion – something sorely needed around the climate and nature crisis. We were pleased to be able to sponsor tickets to ensure inclusivity and we did this for 13 individuals who all attended.



We have also screened a few other films and intend to continue offering this as part of the awareness raising of the climate crisis.

Other Events

12 External visits including visits to schools and invitations to make presentations at various Community Group meetings.

25 Educational talks were held in the centre including Permaculture, Women's Health for refugees, Tofutorial, Why being a Vegetarian is so good for the planet, Renewable Energy, Biodiversity, Carbon Footprints and Sustainable Food . We have also held eco book launches!





22 Training sessions delivered internally

- Social Media
- Fresh Water monitoring
- One Planet Living Framework
- Health and Safety
- Volunteers Training

9 Schools/institutions/Groups engaged

- Outreach to St Birinus School and commitment delivered
- Outreach to Didcot Girls High and commitment delivered
- Outreach to St Helen and St Katharine and commitment delivered
- Outreach to John Mason School and commitment delivered
- Outreach to Larkmead School and commitment delivered
- Outreach to Europa School and collaborations being planned
- Abingdon School - delivery and future collaboration ongoing
- Abingdon and Witney College - collaboration ongoing
- St Nics - Eco Club support ongoing





Youth Engagement

40+ Young people engaged in planning eco events, volunteering their skills, completing DoE awards, doing Work experience, youth ambassadors for One Planet Abingdon. Success measured by the journey. Real success is if the youth continue to engage after their projects are complete.

'Abingdon is extremely diverse, I think that's really cool.

We should celebrate that more.' (Bala, 14 yrs)





















A focus on one of our amazing international volunteers, Guillermo Sanchez-Herrero (aka Will)!



Every morning, as I commute to university, the bus carries me past a sight that never fails to astonish me: the lush greenery of 'Los Lagos' golf course against a backdrop of arid brown. We've never had much rain in Spain, that is true, but over the last couple of years the situation has started to become dire.

Water reservoir levels are at their lowest point in a decade

Currently, water reservoir levels are at their lowest point in a decade, with droughts and heat waves becoming increasingly common. Moreover, according to various estimates, over two thirds of the nation's land is now threatened by desertification. Yet despite all these alarming signs, swimming pools and aquatic parks are filled to the brim, the demand for irrigated crop fields and large-scale farms keeps growing, and golf courses maintain their lush greenery year round. The irony is undeniable. All those problems seem to fade away here in the UK, as water levels remain relatively stable, and the climate, despite a few occasional concerns, is still somewhat shielded from the challenges faced by Southern Europe. However, it's not all smooth sailing in these fair isles.

Only 14% of the rivers have good ecological status

Due to agricultural runoffs and the release of untreated sewage, only 14% of the rivers have good ecological status, and with increasing demand and extreme weather events becoming more frequent, water scarcity could potentially make headlines on the BBC sooner than expected. Water, much like most resources in the developed world, is often taken for granted, pushed to its limits to sustain our ever-growing systems with little consideration for the consequences. It seems that only when the last reservoir has been depleted and the last river polluted, will we come to the sobering realisation that money cannot quench our thirst.

But I don't want to sound overly defeatist. While it's clear that we're currently dealing with substantial challenges, it's heartening to witness the growing awareness as more people join the environmental cause. Each day, we encounter stories in the news about individuals, communities, and organisations dedicated to preserving our planet. Today, I'd like to spotlight one such organisation, which is right in your neighbourhood, known as One Planet Abingdon. I first came into contact with One Planet's team in late July, while browsing for volunteering opportunities during my stay in Oxford. Although I had previous experience working with NGOs and environmental organisations, I had never been involved with a community centre, let

alone in an English-speaking context. It felt a bit out of my comfort zone, I'm not gonna lie, but the prospect of improving my English and gaining some insight into the environmental movement in the UK was too enticing to pass up, so I decided to take on the challenge. As my first interview with Michelle Charlesworth, a co-founder of this initiative, drew closer, a sense of nervousness crept over me, as I had no idea what to expect. Little did I know, I ended up sitting in a room with people I'd just met, indulging in some delicious cake, and engaging in a heartfelt conversation about our emotions regarding the climate crisis.

"Climate Cafe" was an event dedicated to sharing our thoughts and emotions about the climate emergency, to which Michelle invited me to join after our meeting

"Climate Cafe" was an event dedicated to sharing our thoughts and emotions about the climate emergency, to which Michelle invited me to join after our meeting. I must admit, I felt a bit awkward at first, but thanks to their warm welcome, my discomfort quickly faded away, and it turned into a truly enriching experience. I had the opportunity to explore fresh perspectives, as well as meet some of the long-standing members of One Planet Abingdon. A couple of days later, on my first day of volunteering, our main task was to get the cafe up and running again, as it had been temporarily closed due to lift maintenance. I pitched in by assisting with cleaning duties, removing outdated posters, disposing of accumulated trash, and even attempting some arrow designs, which had varying degrees of success. It was, for the most part, a tranquil day, though I had a feeling that this peace wouldn't endure for long. And, just as I suspected, with the reopening of the cafe to the public, the serenity of the first two days rapidly transitioned into the lively bustle of its usual routine. I was assigned to help with their summer camp, a collaboration with Global Education and Development. It proved to be an intense and occasionally chaotic experience. However, in the end, it was highly rewarding, as we had the opportunity to educate the children about environmental stewardship, healthy eating, mindfulness, and conflict resolution. We even put on a little show for the parents on the final day!



On my last day of volunteering, it appeared that my work with children was not quite over, as I was entrusted with running an 'Eco Snakes n' Ladders' game for the youngest ones at our booth for the MarketPlace Health Festival. While it wasn't an overwhelmingly successful endeavour, it did manage to capture the interest of several children (and a few not-so-young ones



too). It proved to be a rather satisfying experience, and served as a fitting conclusion to my time volunteering with One Planet Abingdon.

Now that I'm back in Spain, I sadly can no longer contribute to One Planet Abingdon, but maybe you can. You're likely already familiar with the basics, like the three R's, using public transport, or watering plants during the cooler parts of the day. If you're eager to make a greater impact, think about joining One Planet, or any local group in your area, explore initiatives to improve your community, and keep sharing your knowledge with those close to you. Remember, it doesn't have to be grand – every little drop counts!

Guillermo (Will)

It is with gratitude that we share Will's experiences with you all. As Will says - keep sharing your knowledge with those close to you and get involved!

Thank you



Thank you to Abingdon Town Council for their continued support and faith in One Planet Abingdon CEC (OPACEC).

In this difficult time that we are living in - there is hope. If we can rise to the challenge and do all we can to avert climate collapse. For us in Abingdon that means engaging with the fact that we have an amazing space where you can come… be a part of the community as we build resilience through learning and raising of awareness. Using the one planet living framework as our guide, using our determination and gratitude, care and support of one another to get through this. It's not easy and there is much to do. But we can also have fun whilst doing it. Come on in and be a part. The volunteers who have been with us from the start, they need you, we need you. None of this would be possible, without the dedication of our volunteers - thank you. Let's keep on doing all we can to create our 'One Planet Abingdon'.

Michelle Charlesworth Co-Founder - One Planet Abingdon Climate Emergency Centre

With much appreciation to our supporters…

A call to action!

We hope that you have been inspired by our activities thus far and that you are feeling moved to participate and support in some way. We have managed to do all of this with very few funds and would love to be able to do more and more often. We are in a climate emergency and we have no time to waste.

One Planet Abingdon is run entirely by volunteers. It's rewarding work and we're always looking for people to join our amazing team! Whether you are looking to donate time, skills or expertise; looking to learn more about the environment and the issues facing it, to socialise, gain experience, give something back to society, we would love to hear from you.

One Planet Abingdon Climate Emergency Centre is here for you, run by the town's ordinary people doing extraordinary things. We would love for you to be a part of it.

With love and determination from the team at One Planet Abingdon CEC