March 2024

Interim 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. We are working towards a one planet living town!

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 Michelle Charlesworth (Co Founder)

We are very grateful for the continued support of the Abingdon Town Council. In particular supporting us with additional funds to assist with coordination of projects as continuing without this support would have been difficult.



This period has been particularly challenging for me - I have faced burnout and have recently lost a very dear friend to cancer. Her name is Gina and she was one of us. We owe much to her, particularly the systems she put in place which enabled the 5 star food hygiene rating, which was confirmed again in this quarter. A huge asset and we are so grateful. Gina was also instrumental in the Veganuary and Tasting Plates campaign which was hugely successful, as well as paving the way for the eco club at St Nics Primary School. We are very sad that she is gone and will miss her wonderfully generous spirit and beautiful smile. May she rest in peace.

Holding so much of the responsibility for operations at One Planet is simultaneously invigorating and exhausting. We are living in unprecedented times where our very existence is threatened. When you know this - you can't unknow it. The eco anxiety is real - the drive to wanting to do all one can to make a difference becomes all consuming and I admit to losing some balance for a bit. It is important to be transparent - we are not heroes, we are ordinary people doing extraordinary things and the task is huge. We all have a role to play. Let's do what we can together. Thank you.

Photograph: Martin Wackenier

Key indicators

Sep 2023 - Feb 2024



4109 Visitors to the CEC

We have regulars and newbies visiting all the time! Compare this to the same period last year which was **1842**!

65 active Volunteers

13 Steering Group Members

4 Regular Days Open per week including Sundays!

And we now have various regular sessions off site and when closed! E.g. Sewing and Cooking

Licence agreed to **2028**!

We are grateful to Abingdon Town Council who support us with free use of the space

Fundraising

Rent and Services:

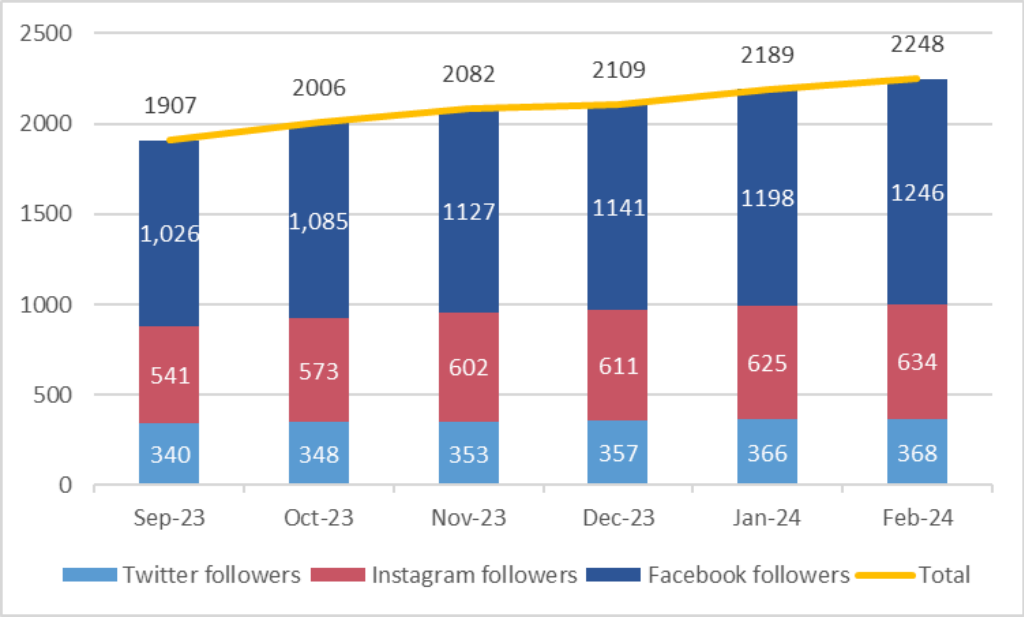
- Abingdon Town Council covers the rent and services which is valued at £7000 pa.

Projects funded:

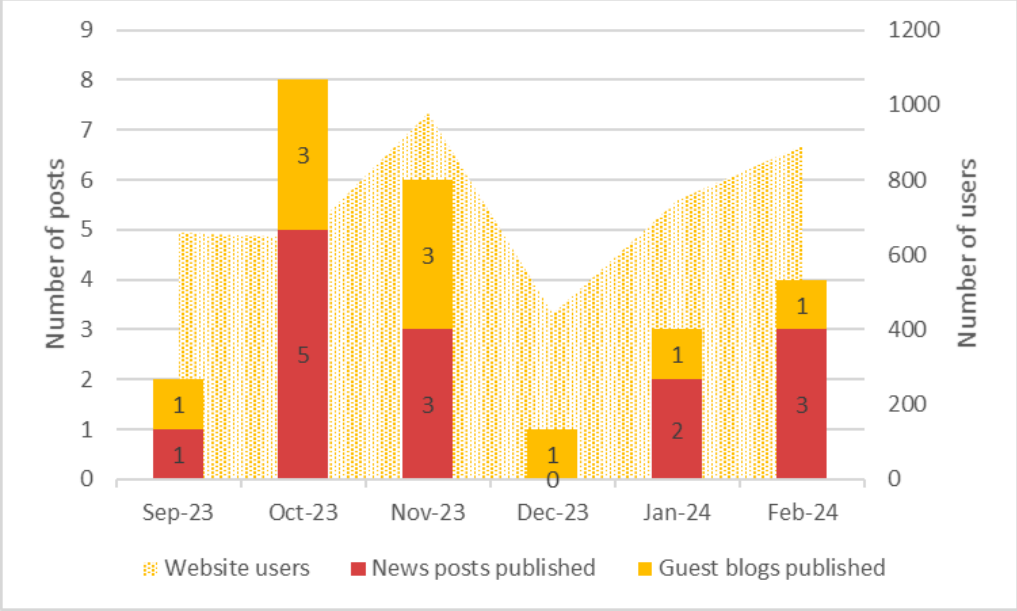
- We were successful in extending the work with **young people**. Christ's Hospital of Abingdon has kindly granted us £11338 to do the important work of youth engagement, effectively 2 days a week paid for 12 months.
- We received £5K for **coordination and delivery of projects** up to end March 2024 from Abingdon Town council with a further 10K for projects for 24/25
- Lush £5K for activities and working with **young people**
- Truck £500 for **ecokids and youth activities**
- Connected Communities Fund £5K to deliver 26 basic **sewing** classes
- Food and Warmth Grant - £2364 for equipment and delivery of 6 **cooking** classes by referral only. This will enable more skills sharing opportunities in the future as we now have the equipment.

Social Media presence

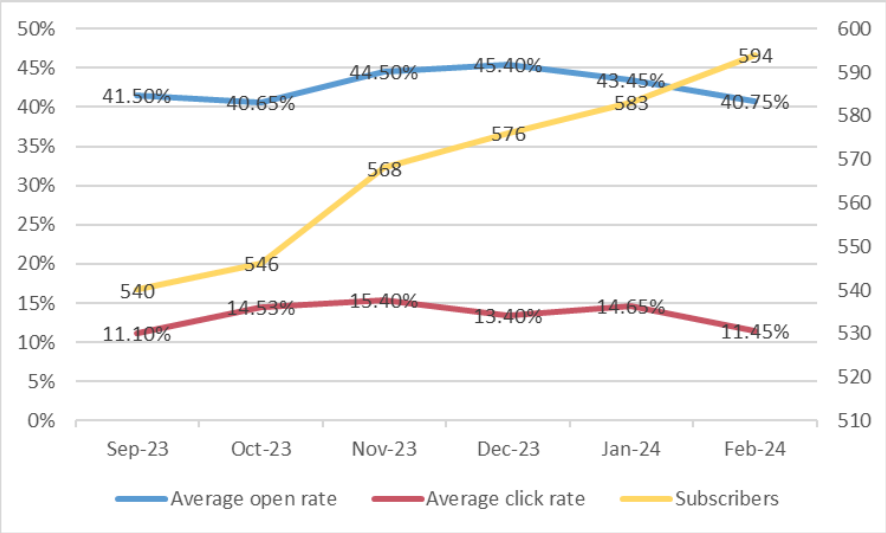
One Planet Abingdon is active on Facebook, Instagram (2 accounts: 1 general and 1 youth) and Twitter.



Website



Mailing list



We send two "Latest News & Upcoming events" emails on average per month.

Diversity (race, culture, origin, age)

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 supporters actively involved is 9 and oldest is 92 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 social prescribers in order to offer a service to patients with mental health and association challenges. The basic cooking classes have helped to reach out to these communities.

We are excited that we have volunteers from all over the world who are living in Abingdon and have committed themselves to supporting One Planet - many of them as families rather than individuals - Polish, Chinese, Syrian, Indian, French, to mention a few. We have also begun a conversation with Host Abingdon to facilitate volunteering by those Ukrainian refugees who are now ready to give back to our community - a symbiotic relationship is evolving and we are very happy about this development.

We are also excited by the progress that we are having reaching out to faith groups in Abingdon and it is only a matter of time before we see the fruits of this work.

We continue to 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 and we are encouraged with the feedback we receive as to how welcomed everyone feels including those who have had difficult lives, have support workers, and are on the margins of society.

Activities for the first half of 2024

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

Including:

- 🧶 Learn to knit
- 🎶 Fun with Music for kids
- 👑 Learn to play chess sessions
- 👗 SwishPreLoved Clothing
- 🎀 Natural Wreath Making
- 🚲 Bike Checks & workshop
- 🌱 Plant Swaps
- 🥗Salad and Chat
- ✂️ Eco crafting for kids
- 🍆Vegan Tasting Plates
- 📽️ Film Screenings
- 🗣️Climate Conversations
- ♻️ Upcycling Workshops
- 🥕 Fermentation Workshops
- 💚Climate Cafe for emotional support
- 👧🏾Teen craft led by teens
- 🍌Composting Workshops
- 🖼️Collage Workshops
- ✍️Writing Workshops
- 🪱Bin Wormery Workshops















3 Special Events/Projects



Climate Justice - Empowering Voices Writing Workshop and Fast Fashion Exhibition

The idea to hold an interactive exhibition originated from the "Empowering Voices" workshop led by OPACEC volunteer and actor, Khairika Sinani who created a transformative journey delving into the art of creative writing and performance, with a strong focus on climate and environmental justice themes.



The Empowering Voices Writing workshop culminated in a special launch of the exhibition 'Fashion Footprint - Stories from the wardrobe' in the historic Abbey Buildings, before relocating to the beautiful rooms of the Council Chamber for the duration of the exhibition. The delivery of an interactive exhibition with dressed mannequins, film screening and information was a big commitment for us, but we felt it was successful in getting the message across that fast fashion is inter-connected to climate change and climate justice. The free exhibition was well attended and ran for 11 days with 100s attending on the final day of the showing





'Very good and thought provoking. We all need to know about how our spending on clothes affects the world around us and buy more sustainably, second hand, wherever possible and yes, repair and re-purpose our clothes too. The film is very good - a hard watch but good.'

'Everyone should see it!'



We are grateful to Dionne Freeman, Oxford Makespace, who has enabled a mobile version of the exhibition to travel so as to continue to raise awareness and inspire action. It is currently being exhibited at the Community Works in Oxford - Lula's restaurant. The exhibition will then move on to Didcot and Abingdon.



Will you pledge not to buy anything new in 2024?

Basic Sewing Skills

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES FUND



The Basic Sewing Skills sessions we knew would be a winner - we didn't realise how much of a winner it would be though!
The funding is for 26 sessions and to date we have delivered 10. The first round was held at Bridge House Care Home which was successful insofar as bringing the communities closer together - and we look forward to collaborating with them again soon (Bespoke PreLoved clothing event in April).

The second round of sessions is currently being held at the Makespace Studio in The Charter. These are evening sessions as the feedback we got on Facebook was for evenings. The block of 6 sessions were 'sold out' within days - proving that this is a workshop that many people are feeling the need for.



We have been encouraged with the diversity of the participants and the feedback we have received is that individuals are feeling more connected and are enjoying the format of the sessions.

We are very grateful to OCVA and OCC for the funding and hope to offer these for young people too should we be successful in finding more funds as these are for adults only.

Community Cooking Coalition -Basic Cooking skills with the Food and Warmth Grant



We were very excited to be a part of the Community Cooking Coalition offering basic cooking skills sessions to those with support workers who could refer in.



The funding received was for the purchase of kitchen equipment and 6 sessions (2 rounds of 3 sessions).

These have been fun to deliver and it has been heartwarming to get to know the participants who have gained so much more from the sessions than learning how to cook healthy, vegan meals. Feedback has included feeling part of a community, gaining confidence, feeling less isolated, learning about vegan food and realising that it is delicious, understanding that vegetables are not just good for us but versatile too!

We hope to find more funding to continue this valuable work. The learning and collaborative experience has been fantastic.

Other Events



12 External visits including visits to schools and invitations to make presentations at various Community Group meetings and events including Bridge House Care Home, Stonehill Community Garden, other climate emergency centres who are trying to emulate what we have achieved.

7 Educational talks were held in the centre including Sustainable Food, eco cleaning workshops, fermentation, composting, making hummus to mention a few!

8 Training sessions



- Social Media
- Fire Safety
- One Planet Living Framework
- Health and Safety
- Volunteers Training
- External Climate Fresk training
- Carbon Literacy

10 Schools/institutions/Groups engaged



- Outreach to St Birinus School and collaborations in the planning, commitments being delivered
- Outreach to Didcot Girls High and commitment delivered
- Outreach to St Helen and St Katharine and collaboration outstanding

- Outreach to John Mason School and commitment delivered , further work outstanding
- Outreach to Larkmead School and collaborations in the planning
- Outreach to Europa School and collaborations continue
- Abingdon School - outstanding
- Abingdon and Witney College - outreach and collaborations in the planning
- Unicorn School - outreach and collaborations in the planning
- OLA - outreach initiated

Youth Engagement

50+ Young people engaged in planning eco events, volunteering their skills, completing DoE awards, doing Work experience, being 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.



A message from one of our Youth Ambassadors:
'Hi, my name is Lena, I started volunteering at OPA for my Bronze Duke of Edinburgh, but even though 3 months have passed I have decided to continue helping out because I enjoy it so much. My original idea was to start craft sessions for older children (and that did happen) but as well as this I helped behind the counter, I baked cakes for people and completed some projects that Michelle had given me to do. 😁 My work has inspired many others and has involved my whole family. Among other things, this experience has enabled other things for me, e.g. I am going on a scholarship to Germany to learn more about the language and culture and later will have to organise projects similar to the ones at OPA. The volunteers there are really lovely and it is quite nice to have a chat with them, maybe learn something new 😌. I have really enjoyed helping out with OPA and hope that many other people will follow in my footsteps and do their part to help save the planet and in doing so, be a good citizen of our community.'






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ISSUE













Maen’s story



Maen left his hometown, Aleppo in Syria, at the start of 2012 when the revolution turned into an armed conflict and the country became unlivable. After marrying his wife, Manar, he left everything behind, including his home, people, and memories, in search of safety for himself and his family. He arrived in Lebanon and considered getting a visa for a more stable country, as Lebanon was not safe.

Maen was unable to get a visa for Saudi Arabia, where his wife had a family visa due to her parent's previous employment as dentists. He started looking for jobs to support his family, starting with teaching Arabic to non-Arabic speakers. He eventually found work in the humanitarian sector and was offered a position with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to provide education activities and non-formal education to Syrian refugee children.

Due to increasing restrictions on Syrian refugees and those working in the humanitarian sector in 2015, Maen became concerned about being deported to Syria and endangering his family's lives. He moved to Turkey, where he continued working in the humanitarian sector, developing professionally and personally. He found a better job at Rielf International and then joined the German Corporate for International Cooperation (GIZ). He worked there for three years, developing his skills and getting promotion while continuing to support Syrian refugee children in Turkey.

With additional restrictions on Syrian refugees and work permits, Maen realised that Turkey was not a long-term solution. He started looking for opportunities to develop his skills and qualifications to obtain international opportunities in the relief sector. He won a prestigious scholarship, Chevening, in 2019, funded by the FCDO, which allowed him to travel to the UK and study an MA in Education (Leadership and Management). Due to financial constraints, Maen had to spend three years away from his family. In October 2022, Maen was finally reunited with his family (Manar, Lara, and Ali) and moved to Abingdon to start a new life.

Maen believes in contributing to the community and supporting global causes. He found a family-friendly and welcoming place, One Planet Abingdon Climate Emergency Centre, where he and his family can spend quality time together. Maen believes that the organisation's mission aligns with his values and how he can contribute to his community. Currently, Maen and his daughter, Lara are both volunteering with One Planet.

As Ramadan began, Maen and his family shared food with their friends, family, and community, as the month is about sharing love. Maen hopes that he and his family can contribute to the community and represent their culture and background as active members.

It is with gratitude that we share Maen’s experiences with you all.

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 little 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 critical 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.