# September 2024
# 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, Jonathan



“Hello everyone,

As I reflect on this year 2023/2024, I think about all the impressive things OPACEC has done. Three years of hard work by our volunteers was showcased in the festival we put on 15th June. We have never been more visible as we occupied the square - we lured unsuspecting victims in with colourful stalls, games, displays, music, and talks. As volunteers, we know that working together can be an uplifting and fun experience, but I think we showed some Abingdon residents that while the climate crisis is a frightening reality - it can be addressed with collective action and a smile on our faces.

I wish I could say everyone in the UK felt the same urgency and desire for change. We have seen climate activists put in prison for peaceful protests, a former government with a record number of private jet flights around the country and a half-hearted mention of the climate crisis in the election cycle. We need to continue to do our good work - it's a tiring endeavour, but we need to inspire change and stand up for the planet.

As I look forward to next year, I reflect on OPACEC's challenges. We have a volunteer base that expands and contracts - sometimes unpredictably. We also suffer from issues that many non-profit organisations do when they grow - we have so many ideas, but only a limited number of people to lead these events. People volunteer for different reasons and expect different things from the organisation. We want to keep everyone well informed but have limited time to seize on opportunities to start new projects. The fact that these problems are common actually gives me some comfort, these are fixable problems - not all in one swoop, but with concerted effort over time.

As I reflect, I'm optimistic about what is to come. The festival showed that when we have all hands on deck, we can take bold actions. Our regular events like chess and knitting continue to bring in more youngsters, and in turn their parents. I'm optimistic around the Social Saturdays/Climate Conversations which sees higher turnout each week. I am both excited for - and dreading - the day that we'll have so many people in the CEC listening to our talks that we'll run out of chairs and will exceed our capacity for fire regulations!

On a personal note, I relocated to Abingdon two years ago for a job at the Harwell Science campus. OPACEC is one of the first places I visited that convinced me that I could settle in this lovely town. The kindness, passion, and dedication of the volunteers has been inspiring and I'm very grateful to be a part of it. I've bought my first house in Abingdon this month, so I'm here to stay!

See you all soon!”

# Key indicators ‘How well are we doing?’

August 2023 - August 2024



## Visitors to the CEC

**8340** almost double the number of last year!

## Volunteers

**60** active




## Steering Group Members

**15**

## Regular Days Open

**5** per week including most Sundays!

## Licence agreed to **2028**!

Abingdon Town Council supports us with free use of the space!









# Regular activities for our third year of operation

**278+** Eco events in the centre and elsewhere, held within the 10 Principles of [One Planet Living](), the framework which underpins all we do.

## Including:

📚Eco Library
🍏 Apple Pressing with ACC
🧵 Make and Mend with ACC
🔧 Repair Cafes with ACC and OWR
🧶 Learn to knit
🎶 Fun with Music for kids
👑 Learn to play chess sessions
👚Pre Loved Clothing Events
🎀 Natural Wreath Making
🚲 Bike Checks & workshops with Clive
🌱 Plant Swaps
🥗Cultural Lunches
✂️ Eco crafting for kids
🧶Youth Sundays
📽️ Film Screenings
🗣️Climate Conversations
🖼️ Art Exhibitions
♻️ Upcycling Workshops
And so much more!













# Fundraising

## Overheads:

- Abingdon Town Council covers the rent and services which is valued at £7000 pa.
- Insurance with Friends of the Earth

## Projects funded through grants:

### 🙏OPACEC CoOrdination

Abingdon Town Council (ATC) supported us with two grants, £5K (2023) and £10K (2024).

### 🙏Work with Young people see more on page 18

Christ's Hospital of Abingdon has kindly continued their support of our work and granted us £11338 to do the important work of youth engagement.

Lush £5K and Truck Festival £500 supported us to further the work with young people. Read about how this has helped artist Lou Williams on page 18
Tesco Community coupons awarded us £500 for work with young people too.
Newbury Building Society supported us to sponsor holiday work for our Youth Ambassador, Ava Hall. Read her piece in the Town Crier Ed 74, and her note of gratitude to NBS on page 19.

### 🙏One Planet Living Festival - see more on pages 14&15

ATC also supported the One Planet Living Festival with £1500 to pay for the artists and infrastructure for the festival



Further funding for the festival was gratefully accepted by Oxfordshire CAG, Doris Field Trust, GreenCoreHomes and project management time donated by the amazing Heather Brown from Abingdon Event Partnership







Effie, probably our youngest supporter (6yr old), raised money to save the planet via a fundraiser £560 🥳

## 🙏Community Cooking Coalition -Basic Cooking skills, Food & Warmth Grant



Learning to cook plant based from scratch, was enabled by funding just over £2000 from the Food and Warmth Grant which enabled us to offer free sessions for 3 months. This was an exciting collaboration with Kerry Locke (SOFEA, Nourish and Flourish), Maymessi, Style Acre, and Down to Earth. Pippa stepped up and did a Food Hygiene course for catering and was our Chef after learning from the beautiful Henna from Planted Plates.

We hope to offer these opportunities to learn how to cook delicious plant based through other funding pots as they come available.



Replenish and CAG Oxfordshire continue to support us with their expertise, small funding grants and delivery of food and composting workshops. We are grateful to them - and look forward to working even more closely together in the future.

## 🙏Sewing seeds in the Community with Basic Sewing Skills

see more on page 13



The Connected Communities Fund enabled us to start the basic sewing lessons at the end of 2023. These have been an incredibly popular skill learning opportunity and we are always over subscribed. The £5K grant has opened up so many possibilities!

*'I really enjoyed getting to know everyone on the course, learning essential sewing skills from the experienced pros, and hearing about the other initiatives in Abingdon.*

Just before going to print we have had confirmation that our bid was successful and so this important work can continue.🎉

### 🙏 Shared Prosperity Fund - Vale of White Horse £9K



We all know that we need systemic change and that everyone needs to be engaged. This funding enables support to the local businesses of Abingdon. We help them to understand the One Planet Living Framework and support them to create a climate action plan. This funding ends March 2025.

### 🙏 Well Together - Vale of White Horse £6120

'The Well Together Programme is delivered in partnership by OCVA and CFO and funded by the NHS Integrated Care Board. The funding must be spent within 12 months and was received in August 2024, just in time to be mentioned in this report. Please support us as we focus on the needs of the Caldecott Ward.

## Success Stories

### Sarika is a finalist for the Climate Awards!

Sarika Biradar, 10yr old daughter of Santosh and Sangita (volunteers) has been named a finalist in the YOUTH CLIMATE ACTION CHAMPION category of the Oxford Climate Awards 2024. Thank you to Thameside Primary School for nominating her.




She cares about our planet by her actions; she is a cyclist, a volunteer at One Planet Abingdon, frequently picks up plastic waste from parks and streets, and writes stories and essays about climate change. She was recently selected as a speaker on climate change for the Thames Valley Academy Trust's mini speech competition. Working with One Planet has played a significant role in this and we are all proud and rooting for Sarika at the awards to be held on 17 October

This is what authentic looks like! This is what role modelling looks like! OPACEC is creating the leaders for tomorrow.

## Fresh Water Watch - Report from David Marsh:

The VOWH Climate Action Fund which enabled the FWW project in 2022/23 continues - additional fundraising enables this important work to continue.

Over the past 12 months our group of 14 volunteer members have taken monthly water samples from 10 different locations in the Abingdon area. As part of each survey, water samples were taken and on-site observations recorded and photos of each site submitted. Members measured levels of nitrates and phosphates in the water using a dedicated kit that participants have received training to use. OPA group have together submitted 86 survey reports to the FreshWaterWatch data-base in the last 12 months.



*River Ock, Abingdon - one of 10 different locations that One Planet Group survey*



*← Member of OPA Group taking a river water sample from the river Ock in Abingdon.*

*→ Testing for phosphates and nitrates:*




Over the last 12 months One Planet Abingdon Group, one of many in the Oxfordshire area, have inputted data to the Freshwater Watch data-base about the condition of the rivers and waterways in the Thames basin. It is important that data is collected over a number of years to show trends and gather evidence that is robust, evidence that can be used to put pressure on decision makers locally and nationally.

***Since September 2023 One Planet Abingdon Group have found high levels of nitrates in the vast majority of surveys made. Levels of phosphates measured during this period also show raised levels. These readings are markers for poor ecological state of the water-ways in and around Abingdon.***

## We won the Ridgeway Education Trust Award!

Elianne Edgington, Work Experience Coordinator, Ridgeway Education Trust presenting us with the RET Employer of the Year Award 2024 for our contributions to the development of young people, both in offering work experience, and in speaking at school events over the year.



*'You have been so generous in hosting a number of students from our Trust, with Year 9 in November, Year 12 in March, and Year 10 in May and July. We greatly appreciate you giving this time to students who often wouldn't have any work experience if it weren't for your kindness and motivation to engage with young people.*

*Whilst perhaps a little different from the students' idea of a traditional workplace (since you are all volunteers), they certainly develop a really useful set of employability skills during their week with you, including the ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing, working as a team, creativity and using their initiative. They do so whilst learning about the issues affecting the planet and enabling them to have wider conversations about how to tackle those issues at home, in school and in the workplace.*

*We had great pleasure in presenting you with the RET Employer of the Year Award 2024 for your contributions to the development of these young people, both in offering work experience, and in speaking at school events over the year - thank you so much!'*

Our work with many schools continues, with more and more schools showing an interest. We must have more than 10 minutes in Green Assemblies though! We would like to develop school Ecoclub support and plan to offer educational sessions.  The students seeking work experience, DoE and Volunteering, are growing.



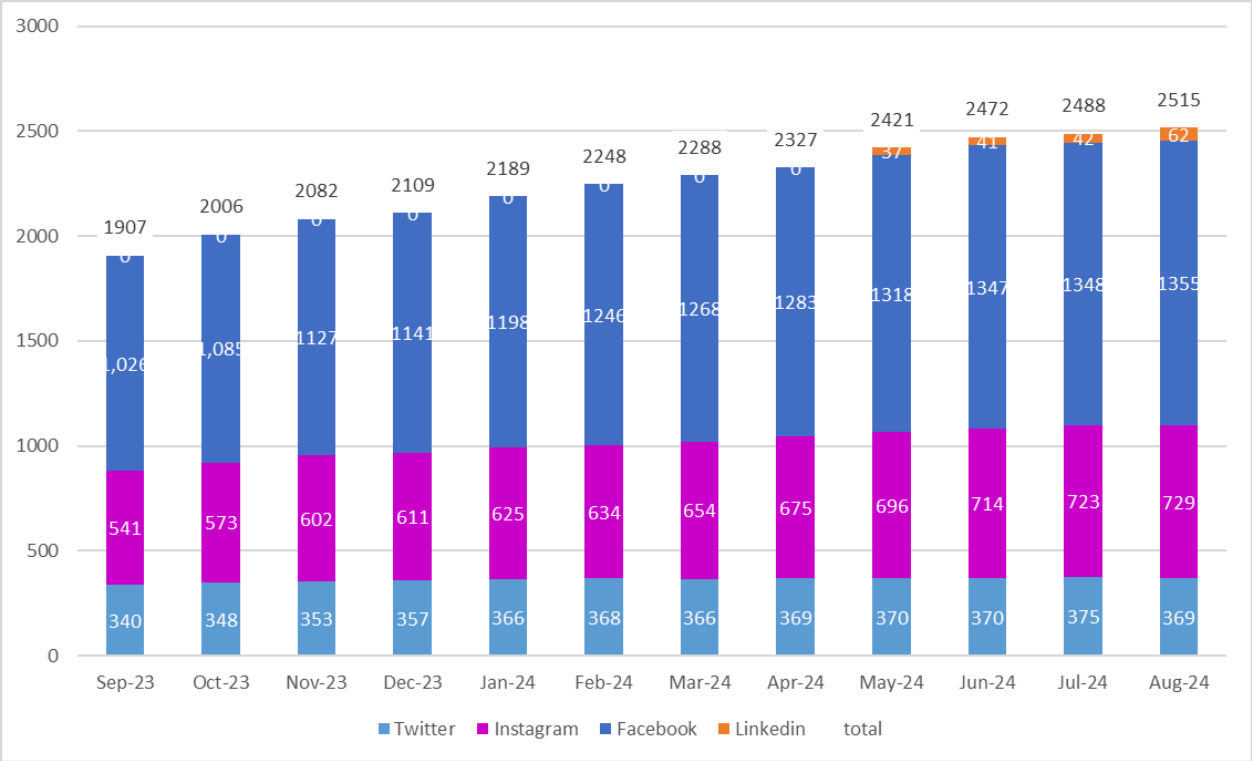
*Our new Mayor, Gabby Barody has chosen One Planet as one of her charities!*



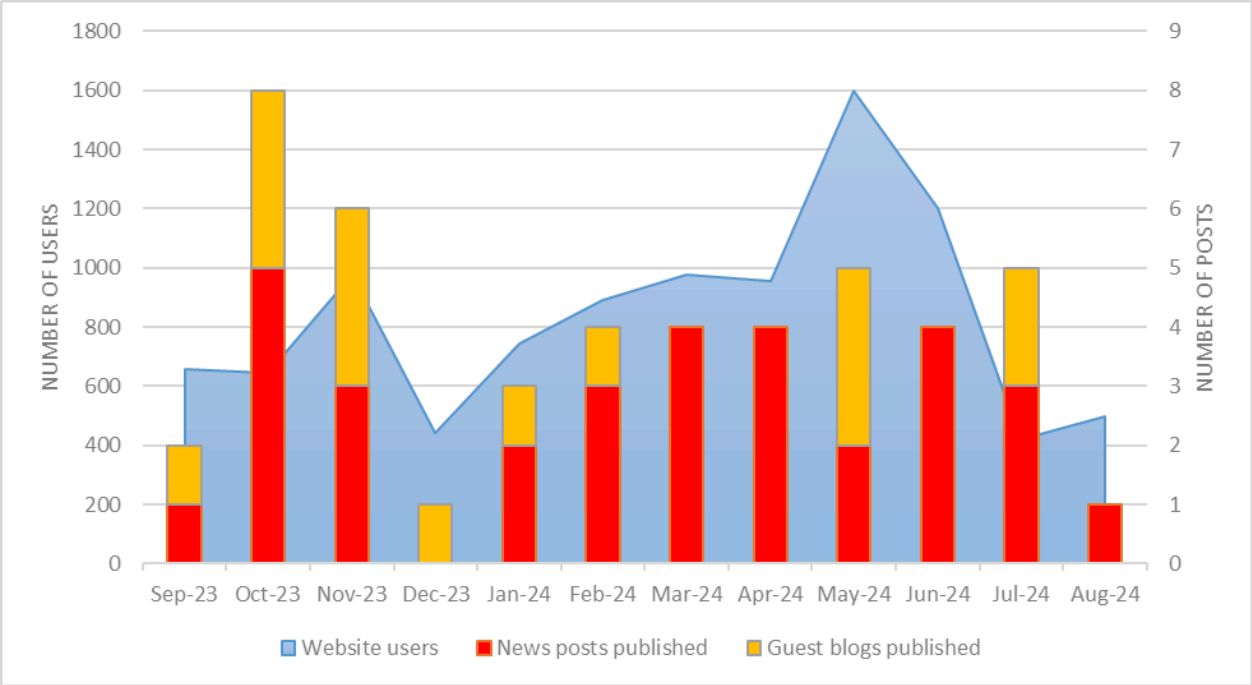
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# Social Media presence

One Planet Abingdon is active on Facebook, Instagram (2 accounts: 1 general and 1 youth) and LinkedIn (since May 2024). We closed our X account in September 2024.

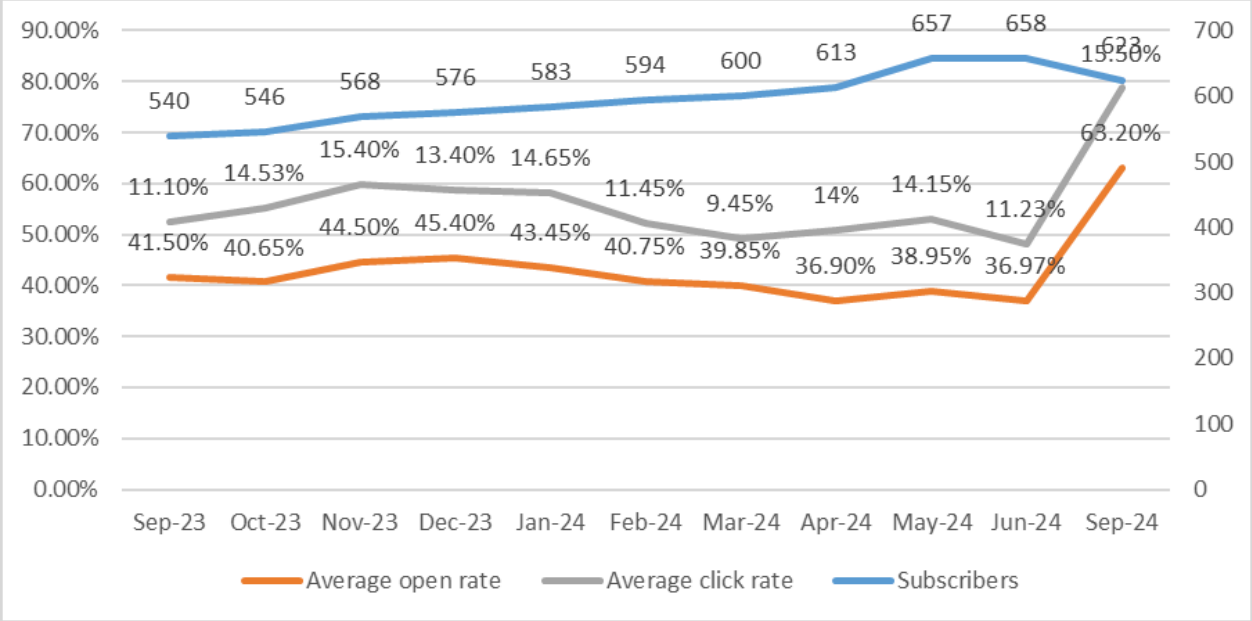


## Website




## Mailing list

We send two “Latest News & Upcoming events” emails on average per month but are short on digital volunteers so had to take a summer break. We use Mailpoet integrated in Wordpress.



# Inclusivity









Our previous Annual Report spoke of all the different visitors we have welcomed at One Planet. From all over the world. This time, we are reporting that not only do we have visitors from all over the world, but volunteers and supporters too. The photos speak for themselves and we are so grateful for the learning and community that we are building together. We are not counting the various ethnicities anymore - we are all one people.  Humanity. Join our exciting community where everyone is welcome and has something that they can contribute to prepare us for the challenges ahead..





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







*Our very own rainbow nation is being created at OPACEC !*

# Special Events

We covered the first 3 events of this annual report extensively in our March 2024 interim report which you will find here if you missed it!

## Climate Justice - Empowering Voices Writing Workshop and Fast Fashion Exhibition (Aug - November 2023)



Our exhibition is still live and is currently at 67 Lydalls Road, The Junction!

The exhibition has been on a road show and after the Grand Opening in November at the beautiful Abbey Buildings and old Council Chamber (Guildhall), it has travelled to Lula's Restaurant in Oxford and back to our very own Abingdon Museum. If you haven't seen it yet - now's a good time!

## Basic Sewing Skills (Feb - ends Nov 2024)



This project has brought together a fantastic diverse group of people (although mainly women) who had little to no experience of sewing when they began and who have gone on to learn basic, practical and transferable skills. All along they have been forging friendships and connections with people in the community they may not otherwise meet. These skills will become invaluable in our changing world, strengthening community glue and fostering a mend and make do attitude, reusing, repairing, recycling and reducing waste.



The very successful draught excluder project, tied into another OPACEC initiative regarding insulating homes, where we used donated fabric and old trousers to make draught excluders, stuffed with waste fabric, which were then donated to the OPACEC. Hosting at two different venues at different times of the day in Abingdon allowed us to reach different audiences. MakeSpace in particular has been a very successful location as it is in the town centre.

# One Planet Living Festival with Evoking Belonging (August 2024)

Photos by Jessica Chaundhy



The event was a collaboration between One Planet Living Climate Emergency Centre with Abingdon Carbon Cutters, Evoking Belonging and Abingdon Events Partnership.

We made a concerted effort to engage with local and diverse artists in order to deliver the various parts of the festival and the support of Dr Dianne Regisford was key to making this possible..

The Festival demonstrated the 10 One Planet LIving Principles - and platformed the 'Culture and Community' principle, in a collaboration with Evoking Belonging's Dr Dianne Regisford who hosted the Evoke Culture Festival part of the day! See her report on P15.





The festival was hailed as a fine example of what all towns and villages should be working towards. A true reflection of the diversity and colour that are living in Oxfordshire. Our community.. And so we celebrated it, in true Caribbean style with music and poetry. Dancing and plant based street food. In amongst the Morris Dancers was a sight to behold. A first for Abingdon..

Evoke Culture Festival Impact Report

## by Dr Dianne Regisford here, excerpt below:



This Impact Report captures the impulse and spirit of a pioneering partnership between One Planet Abingdon (OPA) and Evoking Belonging. Following an invitation from One Planet to join hands in partnership for the One Planet Living Festival, Dr Dianne Regisford, founder and visionary of Evoking Belonging came on board as a co-creation partner.

The Evoke Culture Festival was created to platform African-Caribbean ARTivists from across Oxfordshire. Key to the creative conceptualisation of the ECF is the intention to address the social justice pillars of voice, participation, representation. The platform is designed to increase visibility of who we are and what we do, shared creatively as acts of belonging.




This was the first time in Abingdon's history of public events, that a cultural festival which platforms Oxfordshire based, African-Caribbean culture, local entrepreneurs and artists took place.



*"I said yes out of curiosity and solidarity",*
*Rawz: Poet, Musician, Artist, Inner Peace Records*

Belonging encapsulates the feeling of being accepted, valued, and integrated into a community or group. It is the sense of fitting in, of being recognized and embraced for who you are.



*'The Morris Dancers and the African Dancers (Alpha Afro Fitness) unexpectedly danced together to the delight of the crowds.'*



Ultimately, the journey of belonging is a deeply personal and collective endeavour, one that invites individuals to embrace their heritage, honour their culture, and cultivate a sense of belonging that enriches both their own lives and the communities they inhabit. - Dr Dianne Regisford

A small excerpt from the report, please do read it in full here.

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## Pre Loved Clothing Sales with Pippa (April, June, July 2024)



These events continue to be a huge success! 100s of visitors join in every time Pippa collaborates with us on trying to reduce waste and reimagine how we buy our clothes. We are grateful for the collaboration.

Our throw-away attitude toward fashion and tonnes of textile overproduction are causing destructive levels of textile waste. Clothing production globally has doubled in the past 20 years, yet we're wearing each item much less and millions of tonnes of clothing waste are being thrown away every year, often ending up in landfills.



Most of these are made from synthetic materials like polyester which are not biodegradable resulting in microplastic pollution—the tiny synthetic fibres that shed off when you wash your clothes make their way into the ocean and water systems.

We look forward to a time when this is how we shop *all* the time! Our next event is on 23 November.



## Let's stop doing this!



## Collaborations (2023-24)

Heather Brown reflects on another exciting groundbreaking event with OPACEC:



With our accumulated experience of events in Abingdon stretching back over more than a decade, we set up Abingdon Events Partnership three years ago to support the community and provide a professional events service to underpin the incredible work of the many voluntary organisations in this town.

Having been involved in organising the Extravaganza, the Local Excellence Market, Heritage Weekend, ATOM Science Festival, Healthy Abingdon, and others, we thought 'we knew it all'. We have a well-honed, experience-based set of procedures that make events we are involved in as successful as they can be. It's a recipe for smooth-running and trouble-free event management.....stick with the formula if it works, right?

Get on board with One Planet Abingdon and Evoking Belonging to organise the One Planet Living Festival and you are in for a much more exciting ride! Right from the start there was a declaration of intent to do things differently, to involve parts of the local community who don't usually get involved, to offer music that wasn't the same as at every other event, to blend music, dance and poetry and draw on cultures that don't often get an airing on Abingdon Market Place. Challenging? It was indeed.

There were some bumps in the road and new ways had to be found to do things but with incredible drive and energy the team resolved one problem after another to reach the goals they had set themselves.

On the day, my accumulated experience told me that an event that opens to the sound of pouring rain is not going to draw a good footfall - but I had reckoned without the spirit of Evoking Belonging; 'the rain is a blessing' - words from the MC put it all in context. It was the life experience of those who know well the countries far more impacted by global warming than we are. The crowds stayed, the programme continued and, one after another, truly golden moments happened in the Market Place until we were finally all bathed in the sunshine of a perfect afternoon.

Breaking new ground, involving new groups of people, genuinely drawing the community (the whole community!) closer together- it was an eye-dilating privilege to be involved in the One Planet Festival of 2024. What's next, guys?

*Heather Brown*
*Director, Abingdon Events Partnership*

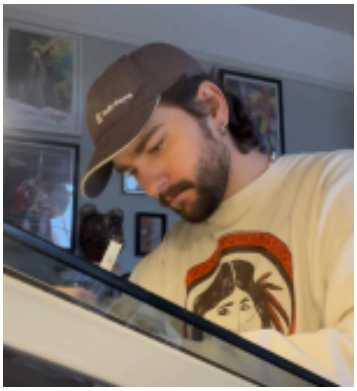
*Immense gratitude to all our collaborators!*

# Youth Engagement

We are very excited about the quality of the engagement we are having with our young people.  A few stories below to illustrate the impact

## *Lou Williams, Illustrator and artist (21)*

We are grateful to Lou for sharing his appreciation of the funding which has enabled him to explore how his skills can spread awareness of the climate crisis.



'One Planet Abingdon has felt like an eye opener for me insofar as witnessing what a community can look like. True community.

As a resident of the town it has allowed me to connect with my community and share experiences with people over a common cause that requires unity above all.

Through running workshops and helping out in small ways, the interconnectivity One Planet Abingdon has allowed for me to feel, is something truly valuable and important for future sustainability and climate awareness for people of all generations.



For my work as an illustrator and artist, it has felt like a support network of sorts, where ideas can be talked about and projects started, a place where I can truly see how my skills can help spread awareness of the climate crisis and how to combat it.'

Look out for Lou's OPACEC calendar coming out soon!

*Lily Bower (16) and Ava Hall, 18*

*'This summer I was privileged to spend my time helping as a Youth Ambassador at One Planet Abingdon, thanks to funding from Newbury Building Society. We're all thankful they recognise the importance and impact of our work. It is with support such as this we can open as many days as we do. I hope to continue my work – organising crafts, tutoring chess, engaging with the Youth group and planning future events – to foster a space for young people in Abingdon to meet and be supported. '* ***Ava***

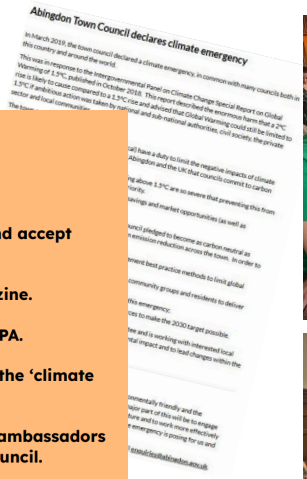


Lily has become a volunteer on her own volition too - and during the summer she participated in the Steering Group as a Youth Representative alongside Ava. Lily's input has been invaluable, sharing her creative skills and leading quietly and masterfully by example.

'I am hugely grateful to have had the opportunity to organise and experience the OPL Festival. Michelle supported the young people brilliantly! I am excited to continue volunteering with One Planet Abingdon, meeting new people, making friends, and learning more about how we can make a sustainable Abingdon.' ***Lily***

## OPA Youth present to the full Abingdon Town Council -31 July 2024

This was a first, and despite nerves, the 3 Flora, Lily and Ava delivered a great presentation. We look forward to seeing how this develops


Abingdon Town Council declares climate emergency

# Our Requests

**Social media: follow 1planetabingdonyouth instagram account and accept collaborations on posts/ share our posts.**

**Town Crier Magazine: put OPA leaflet as a page in the magazine.**

**Send out an email to schools in Abingdon with info about OPA.**

**Regular meetings to understand what to council is doing to address the 'climate emergency' that they declared in March 2019.**

**Adequate funding: for projects aimed at young people/ to pay youth ambassadors so they can fully commit to the work they are doing for the council.**





## Words of encouragement from Co Founder Extinction Rebellion, Dr Gail Bradbrook



Hey, good luck with all you are doing One Planet Abingdon… in my view local work is at the heart of what we need to be doing going forwards, as the meta crisis unfolds.

The more of us that have stared into the face of the abyss, grieved and longed together, and still decided to keep showing up for each other, the more the better… Thank you

## Thank you from Michelle

It is always a pleasure for me to create these Annual and Interim Reports. It allows me to look back and relive the amazing work we have achieved! I feel so privileged to be in this position - working with amazing people and having purpose in my life.

Thank you to Abingdon Town Council and all our funders 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 in this, the most challenging times of our lives.



We invite you to be a part of our community as we build resilience through learning and connection. Using the one planet living framework as our guide, using our determination and gratitude, care and support of one another to come together. Come on in and be a part. 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 is run 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.*