

## **ABINGDON GREEN FORUM SUMMARY APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024** **For Abingdon Parish Meeting 2024**

Abingdon Town Council declared a Climate Emergency in March 2019, in recognition of the crises of global warming and destruction of the natural environment.

The Council pledged to take urgent positive action as a local response to help meet the huge challenges posed. As Chair of the Environment & Amenities Committee, Cllr Gabby Barody proposed a series of Green Forums for 2022 and ongoing, each with a different environmental focus. We reviewed the Green Forum initiative on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023.

The purpose of the Forums is to promote and initiate changes which will help towards carbon neutrality within the town, reduce waste, promote the general well-being of our residents, and improve its Biodiversity.

The Forum Steering Group is a collaboration of Town Councillors and local voluntary groups which are active in trying to improve the town's environment. The Group includes representatives from One Planet Abingdon/ Climate Emergency Centre (OPACEC) and Abingdon Carbon Cutters (ACC), plus others relevant to each particular Forum.

Information is shared on social media and on the Webpage <https://oneplanetabingdon.org/green-forum/> Every quarter there is a display in the OPACEC cafe relating to the current topic.

The Forum invites views and ideas from all Abingdon residents and has included these in feedback to the wider Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan.

Each Forum runs for 3 months; as well as setting aims which can be achieved within the 3 months, the Forums have identified goals for the groups doing ongoing work on each topic.

April-June 2023: ZERO-CARBON ENERGY & BUSINESS, co-ordinated by Michelle Charlesworth, OPACEC. The highlight of this Forum was an Eco-Fair on 13<sup>th</sup> May, in the town centre. Here is an extract from the detailed report, which can be found on the website <https://oneplanetabingdon.org/green-forum/>

“One Planet Abingdon’s first Eco Fair was held on Saturday May 13<sup>th</sup> 2023. 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. The focus was to engage with businesses in our community - to showcase progress made with their sustainable solutions and options.

The event was well attended with 23 exhibitors, most of whom said that they had done a roaring trade during the fair and would like to return should this become an annual event.

The event was well-attended by new Town Councillors elected just a few days before ...Some exhibitors were particularly pleased at being able to reach these

kinds of decision-makers eg: the stand run by Exalta Business Development exhibiting low-cost, low-waste solutions for municipal lighting changeover to LED.

OPACEC is working on a plan of action to engage business further on the OPL framework and to ensure the community can feed into this as business sustainable solutions are essential to help our region face the CEE challenges.”

July-Sept 2023 SUSTAINABLE WATER, co-ordinated by Daniel Scharf, OPACEC Volunteers undertook river water monitoring, as part of the FreshWater Watch Project ([freshwaterwatch.org](http://freshwaterwatch.org)), which looks to regularly test and monitor the status of our local water areas to keep an eye on water quality.

Measuring the water quality in the Thames is an ongoing project and one that involves a number of organisations. One Planet Abingdon has selected eight monitoring points.

OPACEC volunteers are still monitoring the nitrates, phosphates, and turbidity of Abbey Stream, Ginge Brook, the Ock (at two locations), the Stert, Larkhill Stream and the Thames (at two locations). Results are being logged by Freshwater Watch. Anecdotally (ie conversations between the monitors), the nitrate levels are significant, and the phosphates are negligible, but results will be compared more rigorously towards the end of the project later in the summer.

Oct-Dec 2023: CLIMATE JUSTICE: how our lifestyles affect poorer countries Oct-Dec 23, co-ordinated by Daniel Scharf.

Climate Justice event in Abbey Buildings on 24th Nov, which included a display “Fashion Footprint: stories from the wardrobe” and a workshop “Climate Fresk”. Unfortunately, the Christian Aid stall was cancelled due to illness. The CEC stall at the Extravaganza highlighted the need to consider those less well off, both locally and globally, as we enjoy the festive season.

The survey, "Climate Collapse: What would be a fair response?" aimed to gauge Abingdon residents' opinions on climate justice. It also worked to identify primary information sources on climate change and determine the changes individuals are willing to adopt to reduce their climate impact and organise and sort them according to age group. The survey responses were analysed by two students on the Oxford University Internship programme. Their report underscores the importance of considering equity, historical responsibility, vulnerable communities, interconnectedness, and fair transitions in addressing climate change. Moreover, it emphasises the role of accessible and accurate information sources in shaping public perceptions and fostering informed action.

Jan-March 2024: WASTE REDUCTION Jan-March 24, co-ordinated by Anne Smart, ACC

Kim Jones devised ongoing Challenges for 4 categories of Waste: Food, Clothes, Plastics and General. We invite members of the public to take part, noting how much they throw away in one or more category, over a week or longer period. The aim is for people to realise how much they may be wasting, and to set goals to reduce the amount.

Daniel designed an anonymous survey, asking the public about their practices and views on waste. The 200 responses are being analysed by two students on the Oxford University Internship programme. We hope to use the results to demonstrate to our local MP and businesses that there is some momentum among residents of

Abingdon calling for manufacturers to reduce the amount of waste generated, for example plastic packaging.

The survey and Challenges can be found on <https://oneplanetabingdon.org/green-forum/waste-reduction/>

We had a successful stall on the Market Square on 9<sup>th</sup> March, visited by approx. 85 members of the public expressing interest.

April – June 24: GROW YOUR OWN is the topic for the next Green Forum, co-ordinated by Sue Davies of OPACEC. There has already been a lot of proactive planning for this Forum, including:

- > Activities during “Good to Grow “week, 22-29th April,
- > 15<sup>th</sup> April a stall on theme of sustainability, for Development Day at Abingdon & Witney College.
- > 15<sup>th</sup> June stall on local sustainable food, at the One Planet Living Festival, at the end of Great Big Green week.

The WORK of PREVIOUS GREEN FORUMS is ongoing, including ABINGDON DRAUGHTBUSTERS, an exciting HOME ENERGY project, with four volunteers co-ordinated by Ros Woodhead. It’s a free service, funded by a Vale of White Horse District Council Climate Action Fund grant. Referrals can be made from agencies such as Better Housing Better Health, Citizens Advice Abingdon and The Community Connector Team. The goal of the service is to provide basic assistance with draught proofing measures, to help people feel warmer in their homes, help them reduce their energy usage and thus their carbon footprint. We aim to prioritise those who are most vulnerable and need that extra bit of help. Examples of things that Draughtbusters can do: Fit door, window and loft hatch draft proofing, seal gaps (which are not needed for ventilation), draught proof letter boxes, bleed radiators, and provide general heating and condensation advice.

Anne Smart 24/03/2024