

CAG



CAG Oxfordshire
COMMUNITY
ACTION
GROUPS

OXFORDSHIRE

Annual Report 2023-24



Marston Community
Gardening



Hendreds Environment
Group



watering plants in
Rose Hill

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Introduction



Oxfordshire is home to an incredible array of organisations, community groups, and social enterprises all doing amazing work harnessing the power of collective good will. A network comprised of mostly volunteer-led efforts to make the place we call home a greener, safer, fairer and more sustainable place to live, work, and play!

CAG Oxfordshire cannot take credit for the individual efforts of the member groups, but we are their cheerleaders and are pleased to play a small part in their successes shared in this report. They are the heart and soul of the climate action - and beyond - community in Oxfordshire.

65 groups reported activity data for the 2023-2024 project year. These groups held over 8,847 events and activities across the county, reaching over 120,000 participants. More than 22,600 volunteers recorded nearly 130,000 hours of service, a 30 percent increase over 22-23 demonstrating the continued dedication of network volunteers to contribute their time and energy to community action within Oxfordshire.

I am incredibly proud to be associated with such an inspiring, motivated group of individuals from all corners of the County. As an organisation, it is vital that we provide ongoing support to the network as well as individual groups to ensure no one feels alone in their work and that all have the tools necessary to carry out such a wide range of activities. To this end, CAG Oxfordshire could not do what we do without the support of Oxfordshire County Council, our other funders, and wide ranging partners. We appreciate the ongoing, and increased commitment, to empowering communities to deliver local solutions.

Katherine Chesson
Director, on behalf of the CAG Oxfordshire team

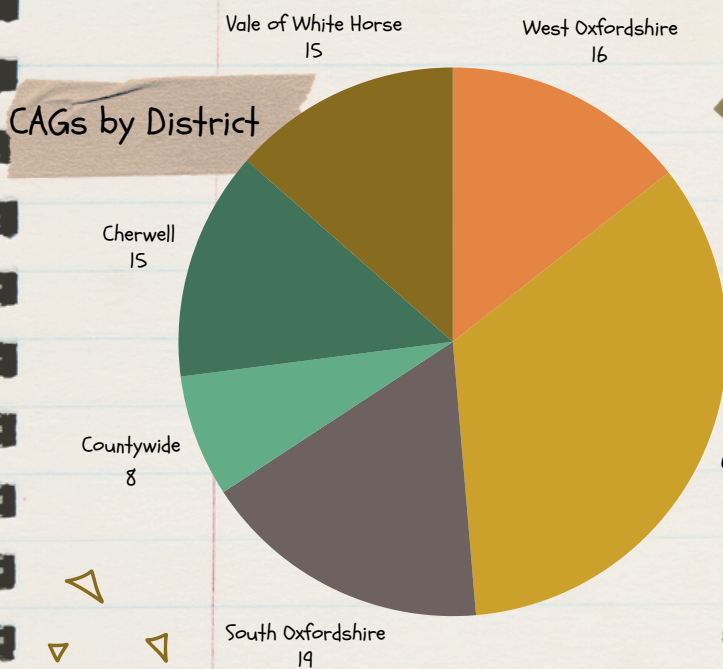


Who we are...

We are a network of over 100 community action groups working across Oxfordshire to make it a safer, fairer, greener, more sustainable place to live, work and play. Together, we're building an Oxfordshire with resilient and empowered communities, so that people and planet can thrive within ecological limits.

CAG members work across a range of climate and social justice issues, bringing innovative ideas and energy to everything they do.

"Since working in another county I've realised even more what a special organisation [CAG] is and how lucky Oxfordshire is to have it."



The network continues to grow and evolve in response to the needs and opportunities in communities across Oxfordshire. Nine new groups joined the network this year taking the total to 111 groups.

District Factsheets

Our series of district factsheets provide a summary of the geographic distribution of our members and the work they're doing.

[click to see them here](#)

"CAGs are a vital springboard for the climate action we need at grassroots level. The county's residents are incredibly innovative...Every CAG is a piece of the jigsaw we need to put together when it comes to tackling climate change." Councillor Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader of the Council with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment & Future Generations



Images:
Cherwell Collective,
Oxford Climate Collective,
Sustainable Didcot,
Abingdon Carbon Cutters, Oxford Conservation Volunteers, Cyclox, Bridge Street Community Garden, Barracks Lane Community Garden

OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE

These are the highlight stats from our year 2023-2024. Our network of over 111 Community Action Groups have been busier than ever engaging communities in climate and community action. Making a difference from the ground up and for that we salute you all...



129,046

Volunteering hours were recorded, more than thirty percent increase from those for 22-23 demonstrating the continued dedication of network volunteers to contribute their time and energy to community action within Oxfordshire.

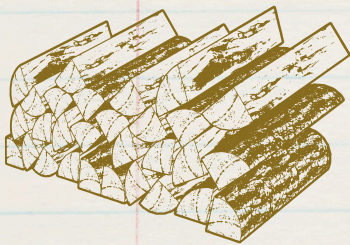


Events and activities were held across the county, reaching over 120,000 participants

8,847



These activities resulted in...

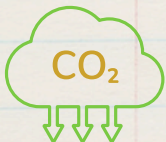


1,654 TONNES

of non-food waste being diverted (including 1,524 tonnes of wood via Oxford Wood Recycling alone!)

678 TONNES

of food diverted from waste and redistributed, cooked, eaten or processed



1,695 TONNES

of carbon dioxide emissions prevented

1,194

Bikes were repaired by groups such as Cyclox, Broken Spoke, and Rose Hill & Iffley Low Carbon saving £396,408



£4,763,418

The total financial output, including the value of volunteer time, grants and income from accross the network

CAG members continued to achieve an incredible amount this year and we've highlighted some key achievements below. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but is designed to showcase the range of innovative activities taking place across the county.

Connecting people with nature

- The Children's Allotment relaunched their after-school 'forest club' for 6-12 year olds and have been hosting monthly family music sessions.
- Abingdon Carbon Cutters engaged nearly 90 volunteers in tending bee-friendly beds and raking and tending local wildflower meadows.
- Green Fifield launched their 'Hedgehog Highway', encouraging residents to connect their gardens to support hedgehogs.
- Oxford Urban Wildlife Group organised an impressive 252 activities at the Boundary Brook nature reserve.
- Oxford Community Action (OCA) continues to organise their community-led monthly hikes.



Biodiversity and nature recovery



- Burford Environment Action Group in partnership with the International Tree Foundation and Blue Cross hosted 45 work parties in which volunteers mulched, weeded and maintained 10,000 trees and hedgerows!
- 11 groups took part in the Garden Tree Giveaway, enhancing gardens across Oxfordshire with a variety of native trees.
- Oxford Conservation Volunteers organised 61 conservation sessions.
- Wild About Wallingford have continued tree planting and maintenance at Wallingford hospital, as well as sowing wildflower meadows, planting bulbs and maintaining the orchard. They have also run gardening sessions and a seed swap at the library with Incredible Edible and helped with Wallingford School's biodiversity garden.

Tackling food waste, food insecurity

- One Planet Clanfield's Sharing Shelves offer produce from the group's Community Allotment, as well as local eggs and surplus bread from the local bakery.
- Abingdon Carbon Cutter's produce table was used by around 200 people during the year.
- Witney Food Revolution now have 200 residents as members of their larder. The group distributed over 220,000 Kg of food in the past year and also delivered free lunches to children in 60 families during the school holidays.
- Cherwell Collective co-hosted a 'Midday Mass' event, in which they distributed 15,000 Kg of surplus food over the Christmas holidays.
- Down to Earth Community Cafe in Wantage ran cookery training to support people to eat and buy more sustainably, which explored food miles, how to eat on a budget, and how to cook using surplus ingredients.



Community food growing



Bridge Street Garden



Oxford City Farm

- The CAG network is home to 28 community gardens and orchards that provide a space for local people to learn practical food-growing skills that employ climate- and nature-friendly methods.
- The community gardens have partnered with an impressive range of organisations to enable a variety of people to attend and benefit from the gardens. These include families, refugees, elderly people, faith groups, school-aged children, adults and children with physical and learning disabilities and young people experiencing social exclusion.
- As well as 'open to all' gardening work parties, the groups delivered workshops on topics including permaculture design, growing over winter, crop protection, scything, apple juicing, and goat milking. Many put on events to mark the seasons including harvest festivals, winter warmers, and wassailing!

Liveable streets and active travel

- CycloX celebrated 20 years of working to make Oxfordshire's roads safer and more welcoming for all road users.
- Windrush Bikes continued to run their Wheels for All programme, offering safe and inclusive cycling sessions on adapted or regular bicycles for those with physical, learning and well-being needs, including a number of asylum seekers housed at a local hotel.
- First and Last Mile provided transportation for roughly 2,250 people in rural areas of West Oxfordshire with the support of 360 volunteers who gave more than 5,000 volunteer hours.



Windrush Bikes



Bridge Street Garden Poster

Sustainable energy

- Transition Eynsham Area collaborated with Project LEO to create a Community Action Plan for Zero-Carbon Energy. It is the first local energy action plan in the UK developed at a community level.
- Rose Hill and Iffley Low Carbon have installed 14 heat pumps in Rose Hill and Iffley to date with 75 free heat loss surveys conducted through their thermal imaging campaign and heat pump project.
- Low Carbon West Oxford ran a talk on Community Heat Networks with speakers from Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire community groups who've set them up.
- Several CAGs ran Draughtbusters programmes, completing low cost upgrades in resident's homes.



Rose Hill Clean Streets

Connecting communities

- The Tandem Collective moved into its second year of running Starling Sessions, a global folk community orchestra. This year, the group successfully made links with asylum seekers housed at the Kassam hotel in Oxford, with the band performing at the hotel and several hotel residents joining the band.
- Banbury CAG Easter event posters were translated into 11 languages, enabling them to reach various multicultural groups including refugees and asylum seekers.
- Transition Chipping Norton's 'Open Access' youth project received positive interest. It led to better play equipment being installed in line with the wishes of teenagers living in the area.

"When you asked if I could teach a song, it made me reconnect with my culture but on my terms, and it felt like it brought down a long held and carefully built wall. It opened new possibilities for expressing my identity and for being fully me."

Circular and sharing economy

- SHARE Oxford's Library experienced a 73% increase in the numbers of hires.
- Five groups ran Swap Shops, where people could enjoy getting new additions to their wardrobe, toys and other items without having to shop for new items. Just two groups alone facilitated the swapping of over 3,000 kg of items.
- 26 groups - an increase of five since last year - ran approximately 260 Repair Cafe events in which they fixed all sorts of items, from toasters and lamps to trousers and bicycles.
- SESI continued to lead the way in the facilitation of reducing plastic use across the County (and beyond) as a key supplier of refill shops, many of which are hosted by CAGs throughout the network. This year, the organisation refilled 870,214 calculated bottles and packaging items. This equates to 17,000 tonnes of plastic eliminated from the supply chain.



SESI Refills Founder, Rina



Share Oxford toy swap at the Westgate Winter Wonderland

Community markets

There are five community markets in the network, who together ran over 200 pop-up markets in the year. They offer a diverse range of local and sustainably-sourced produce. Most have a zero-waste refill stall where residents can get dry goods and cleaning supplies. Several host regular repair stalls. Many of those using the market live locally and therefore do not need to drive to attend. We were pleased to welcome Transition Lighthouse Empowerment Space into the network,

who have established an African-Caribbean Community Market in Blackbird Leys in collaboration with the Oxfordshire African Caribbean Multicultural Association.



Wolvercote Community Market

Supporting equitable health and wellbeing outcomes

- Women of the World (WOW) Space - Transition Lighthouse Empowerment Space ran a "Health Awareness Day" in Barton and continued to run the WOW Space in Blackbird Leys, a self-referred space offering migrant women who have survived FGM, domestic violence and other trauma.
- Flo's continued their 'Early Lives, Equal Start' programme. This is a maternity justice project co-produced by midwives and mothers / birthing people from Black and Minoritised communities who are at greater risk of adverse outcomes during pregnancy and early parenthood.
- Hundreds Environment Group publicised the Community Connectors Winter Warmth scheme by the Vale of White Horse District Council, referring 14 families who went on to access Household Support Fund vouchers.

Women of the World

Early Lives, Equal Start

Community Connectors



Housing justice through community ownership

Oxfordshire Community Land Trust (OCLT) and Hook Norton Community Land Trust continue to work to remove housing - and other assets - from the speculative market by purchasing them and holding them in community ownership in perpetuity. Both trusts have also completed new builds creating affordable and low carbon social homes for Oxfordshire communities.

OCLT and Transition by Design (TbD) have been working with Oxford City Council to identify brownfield sites - including disused council garages - that could be reclaimed for new homes. TbD will develop initial plans for up to 30 comfortable and sustainable homes across at least five garage sites.



Creating community hubs

There are now several hubs in the CAG network. They are multifunctional, offering much-needed amenities to communities and engaging people on climate and environmental issues.

- East Oxford's 'Flo's, The Place in the Park' now employs 53 staff and has become an Oxford Living Wage Employer.
- All hubs help to support sustainable behaviours, such as 'The Hub' in Shrivenham that hosts a refill shop, a pre-loved items shop and recycling collections for 'hard to recycle' items.
- Hubs run sustainability events: Abingdon Climate Emergency Centre hosted an Eco Fair, repair cafes, and 'Climate Conversations' events.
- All hubs run community activities, such as 'The Mix' in Wantage which puts on mindfulness workshops, a craft club and wreath-making at Christmas.
- New hubs set up by CAGs this year include Cherwell Collective's Waste Innovation Station Headquarters (WISH) and Sustainable Didcot's The Green Hub. A new group, Climate Collective Oxford, is hoping to establish a community and climate hub in central Oxford.
- Makespace Oxfordshire celebrated their fifth anniversary alongside numerous successes, including coming to the end of their 'Meanwhile in Oxfordshire' programme, in which they unlocked almost 30 underused buildings.



MORE CASE STUDIES

WE HAVE CURATED A BANK OF CASE STUDIES ON OUR PROJECTS AND THE WORK OF CAG GROUPS. YOU CAN VIEW THEM HERE.

OUR SUPPORT

Our core work as an organisation is to provide free day-to-day support to the network members including:

- Advice, expertise and mentoring to set up and maintain groups and develop projects, events and activities.
- Assisting with finding suitable insurance cover and offering financial support to cover insurance costs for low income groups.
- Access to CAG funding for special projects and support sourcing external funds for larger projects.
- Communications coordination and advice via our communication channels including The Key newsletter and our social media channels.
- Training, skill sharing and networking events and opportunities.
- Access to a large bank of materials and resources.
- Signposting to other organisations and bodies for advice and partnership building.
- Facilitating work with local and national government.

"We appreciate all the help from the CAG and the Replenish project, it makes such a difference to be part of a network of support, as well as funding and advice."

"Thank you so much for all the information and advice on our call this week. It's been useful to connect a whole lot more dots and to feel part of this amazing network."

COLLABORATE GROUPS

To enable network members and partners to work together on common themes, the team organised 21 Collaborate meetings across the following themes:

- Trees
- Nature's Recovery
- Circular Economy
- Energy
- Community Markets
- Food Surplus/ Waste
- Community Gardens



CAG AGM



Xmas Social

"It was truly enlightening and inspiring to connect with others who share our commitment to sustainability and community welfare."

OUR PROJECTS

Alongside supporting our growing network of community and climate action groups, we run projects that support our vision and values.



Replenish stall gets kids involved

Replenish Oxfordshire

WEBSITE

Replenish is a project, funded by Oxfordshire County Council, which supports residents of Oxfordshire to grow and cook nutritious food with zero wastage.



Jo, our project coordinator ran an amazing 57 workshops, stalls and activities across all five districts engaging over 1,000 people; focusing on composting and the importance of food waste reduction. Events were undertaken in partnership with 12 CAGs and 20 external organisations, including SOFEA, Oxford Brookes University, Chinnor Allotment Society, Restore, Waste2Taste Community Cafe and OX10 Community Centre, as well as a number of libraries and district councils. Jo also went on a schools tour with Nourish and Flourish and ran children's activities as part of the Small Steps project at the Down to Earth Community Cafe.



Owned by Oxford

WEBSITE

Owned by Oxford (ObO) is a partnership between infrastructure and grassroots community organisations, aiming to precipitate a shift towards a just, fair, and regenerative economy for the city, working from the grassroots up.

Highlights from the year include releasing an impact report from the ObO pilot, which was launched at an event attended by 45 people, and securing a further £320,000 from two grant funders over 4.5 years for the partnership. These funds have provided significant resources to two BME-led grassroots organisations, Oxford Community Action and African Families in the UK, to ensure greater leadership within ObO by those with lived experience of structural inequalities.



WEBSITE

Oxfordshire Nature Project

We now host the Oxfordshire Treescapes Project, which we integrated into CAG Oxfordshire and renamed Oxfordshire Nature Project. It supports groups and parish councils to access reports, resources and guides that support local nature recovery strategies and actions.

The project so far has distributed 21 Opportunity Reports to community groups and town and parish councils in partnership with TVERC, with follow up engagement as requested. This has allowed continued support to CAGs such as Burford Environmental Action Group who are working as part of a Windrush Catchment cluster of groups and councils advancing nature recovery work. We successfully secured additional partnership support from Natural England and Martin Wills Fund.



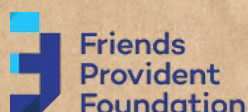
OUR PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

We wouldn't be where we are today without the funders that support our work and our network of partners with which we collaborate. Thank you for working with us in 2023-2024 and we look forward to building our relationships in the years to come.

Our core work is funded by
Oxfordshire County Council.



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**



SIGN UP TO 'THE KEY', OUR FORTNIGHTLY
SUSTAINABILITY NEWSLETTER

STAY IN TOUCH

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