

Gloucestershire Libraries Greener Together Strategy 2025-2028



The Library

WELCOME TO OUR GREENER TOGETHER STRATEGY

Our 2023-28 Library Strategy identified Climate as one of our 5 core themes. The Greener Together Strategy builds on this idea, setting out how Gloucestershire Libraries and Registration Service are responding to the climate emergency and outlines our ambitions in three key areas:

LEADERSHIP what we do

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We strive to be recognised as green leaders in the local community and drivers of change and innovation. We will actively pursue funding and partnership opportunities to accelerate our progress, share best practice and support staff to develop sustainability skills.

OPERATIONS how we do it

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We will embed sustainability into our operations and decision making to reduce our operational emissions (in partnership with key stakeholders) and actively contribute towards GCC's target to become a Net Zero Council by 2030.

ENGAGEMENT what we empower other people to do page 20

Libraries will develop services that encourage sustainable living, increase environmental awareness and help people adapt to the effects of climate change. We aim to empower communities to connect with nature, develop sustainability skills, waste less and share more.

"Libraries are trusted community spaces where people come not just to read, but to learn, connect and take action. This Strategy is a key step in ensuring that libraries continue to serve as dynamic, forward-thinking spaces that respond to the challenges of today and the needs of tomorrow."



GCC Cabinet Member for Public Health, Communities & Fire





Climate Corner



Community Growing



Nature Areas



Library of Things



66 I am encouraged that you are leading the way! A great opportunity for libraries to act as educators 99

THE BACKGROUND

Since 2021 Gloucestershire Libraries & Registration service have been working to reduce our contribution to climate change by reducing our carbon emissions, inspiring others to adopt sustainable behaviours and improving resilience to our changing climate.

The impact of the climate and environmental crisis is already being felt globally and locally; Gloucestershire can expect hotter drier summers, warmer wetter winters and more extreme weather events, as well as secondary social impacts.

89% of people who responded to our survey said they were concerned about climate change

All Gloucestershire councils have now declared a climate emergency. Gloucestershire County Council's declaration in May 2019 included commitments to be net zero as a council by 2030 and support the wider transition to net zero across Gloucestershire.

Gloucestershire Libraries & Registration Service acknowledges the importance of being responsible, sustainable and ethical in order to meet the needs of the present and leave a better environment for future generations. We believe this can be achieved through the skills and knowledge that our staff acquire and put into practice, through customer, business and community engagement, and through our own strategies and operations. We are committed to the promotion of sustainable practice in all aspects of our activities and services, and to raising awareness among all staff, service users, central GCC and partners/stakeholders.



LEADERSHIP

What we do

CLIMATE COMMITMENTS

SUSTAINABILITY SKILLS

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

REPORTING & MONITORING

GRANTS & FUNDING

OUR COMMITMENTS

The Library

- The Library Strategy sets out Gloucestershire Libraries' ambitions until 2028 under the framework of the 5 C's. One of these core strands is Climate and "responding to the climate emergency".
- Our vision states that "Working with and for their communities, libraries will continue to adapt and respond to their changing needs, championing sustainability and promoting health & wellbeing."
- The updated library branding also incorporates a dedicated category for Greener Together to reflect this commitment.

We have signed the #GreenLibraries Manifesto



www.cilip.org.uk/GreenLibrariesManifesto

Bring environmental sustainability to the heart of decision-making
Innovate and evolve

244

Work with our communities

Use our voice for more impact

Work in partnership

Grow and share our knowledge

Support young people

As an Arts Council NPO we have agreed to Environmental investment principals.

- Develop a specific Green Strategy for Gloucestershire Libraries
- Partner with local community groups to enhance and expand the use of the outdoor spaces



- Working with partners throughout Gloucestershire to come up with a collective aim and targets on how to cohesively engage with residents around climate, waste and energy.
- Continue to develop and deliver a programme of Environmental events
- Work with the Think Travel team to explore sustainable travel options
- Implement the delivery of the Greener Together Strategy around climate change



As a council GCC have committed to achieving an 80 per cent reduction in the Council's corporate carbon emissions no later than 2030, striving towards 100 percent with carbon offsetting by the same date. In 2023, all local authorities in Gloucestershire, signed an agreement to work together on a county-wide project to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2045.

CLIMATE COMMITMENTS we will...

- 1) We will understand, track and report on our climate commitments. Ensuring staff at all levels understand the role they play in our organisational and collective net zero journey.
- 2) We will publish an annual progress report, review our targets and set KPIs
- 3) When making new commitments we will be clear what resource is needed to deliver them and understand if the ambition is within our sole operational control, and if not, what stakeholders need to be involved.
- 4) We will align the activities of the Greener Together working group and workbooks with priority areas identified in this strategy and create new terms of reference. Moving forwards the group will play a key role in providing operational feedback, tracking and monitoring KPIs and ensuring there is a flow of communication and data between staff working at all levels.
- 5) Libraries will work towards shared targets with colleagues at Registration Services. Particularly collective issues like staff travel, customer travel, waste and recycling or any matters relating to library buildings that registration colleagues share.



SUSTAINABILITY SKILLS we will...

- 1) Allocate resource or seek additional funding to enable the continuation of staff roles like a Greener Together Project Manager. Continue to allocate resource to support Greener Together Working Group and Green Champions.
- 2) Strengthen and review our policies and support operational staff to understand the importance and the application of relevant policies.
- 3) Grow our network of partners and skilled volunteers and identify a suitable resource for the management or longer-term partnerships and volunteer co-ordination.
- 4) Explore carbon literacy training for management staff, offer basic climate communications training for development team and signpost staff to relevant apps like Love to Ride.
- 5) Continue to share best practice with others particularly exploring sharing toolkits with other libraries. Enter IFLA green libraries award and share our strategy on their SDGs map.
- 6) Consider climate risk and opportunity in continuity planning and service development and leverage our indirect influence to empower and encourage positive change through engagement with our suppliers and service users.
- 7) Use library communications to raise awareness of climate actions being taken by libraries. Create more case studies and have an honest dialogue about our challenges whilst celebrating successes.





We've recently recruited a Greener Together project manager to help us develop and deliver our Greener Together strategy

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

- 1) We will support staff to understand their role in the wider sustainability action plan and identify clear priority areas each year.
- 2) We will continue to promote active travel and share information about GCCs cycle to work, e-bike hire and green car salary sacrifice schemes. To improve data collection an anonymous staff travel survey will be undertaken to help us measure our emissions & identify any barriers to active travel.
- 3) We aim to have Green Champion volunteers based in every library by 2026.
- 4) Registration Services will implement the action plan identified, including provision of active travel information & reviewing when photocopies or digital scans are most suitable.
- 5) Staff reciews (PDRs and induction days will be used as an opportunity to embed and recognise sustainable working practices
- 6) We will continue to support the Greener Together workbooks/awards and celebrate the successes and contribution of our staff
- 7) Once we have more data about our emissions and impacts, we will use this to raise awareness of how staff behaviour can contribute to our overall impact and incentivise behaviour change.

The Greener Together strategy is the legacy of many grassroots initiatives established by our staff and community partners, usually acting in a voluntary capacity outside their operational roles.



REPORTING & MONITORING we will...

- 1) Collate and publish impact reports and emissions calculations using equivalencies and relatable language.
- 2) Report and calculate our annual emissions via Julie's Bicycle or using the GCC central calculations methods. Calculate any additional emissions reductions we are able to (estimated C02e savings) and report these annually with any relevant context.
- 3) Factor in data collection and impact reporting to all future projects.
- 4) Demonstrate the impact of our services such as book issues, digital service, labs and coworking spaces.
- 5) Track fleet emissions and measure the impact of decarbonisation actions like electrification or route optimisation.
- 6) Work with GCC's asset management team to obtain utilities, water & waste data for each library, so we can track our progress at an appropriate time in our reporting cycle.
- 7) Improve data collection and analysis of scope 3 emissions where possible such as staff commute, digital footprint, customer travel, impact of purchased goods and services.





Librarios Saving and Land Libraries. Saving around 1094 tonnes of C02e (compared with buying new). Roughly equivalent to driving around the earth 111 times!

GRANTS & FUNDING we will...

- 1) We will implement the successful delivery of a £50k Library of Things project, establishing new libraries of things in 2025/26. Expanding our network of skilled volunteers and building partnerships to use budget effectively and sustain the growth & continuation of the service.
- 2) Income generation streams, self-sustaining projects and ROI are prioritised. 6 monthly prioritisation exercise undertaken with the income generation team and Greener Together Working Group.
- 3) Grant funding is secured directly or through our partners to enable climate related projects and aspirations to be delivered (especially in relation to engagement)
- 4) Working with GCC Waste & Sustainability Team to identify internal funding and exploring funding opportunities to continue staff resource to deliver Greener Together initiative and seeking opportunities for inclusive climate engagement with young people.
- 5) Connect with partners to engage with people who can support our joint aims or access other funding sources that help us realise climate projects and services.





We have been awarded £50,000 for the development of more Library of Things projects in Gloucestershire Libraries

OPERATIONS

How we do it

BUILDINGS & ENERGY

WASTE & RECYCLING

FLEET & MILAGE

DIGITAL

PROCUREMENT



Most libraries have cycle racks and we plan to add more. We also have a cycle to work scheme.



Greener Together Progress 2024/25



02

On average we estimate you could save 0.7kg
C02e every time you borrow a book instead of buying it!*

Our **Library of Things** in Charlton Kings lets people borrow items rather than buying them. 402 items loaned.

Saving borrowers around **£32,000** & avoiding **15 tonnes C02e**



Most of our buildings now have LED lighting.





Our libraries have recycling bins, we reuse scrap paper and limit staff printing. When refurbishing libraries we always look at upcycled options first.

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*Based on recent IFLA report shared by Finnish libraries

06

We've optimised the delivery routes

between libraries and trained our van drivers to reduce vehicle emissions. We also have plans for **electric vans**.



07

Our FREE computer access, Wi-Fi, warm spaces, desks & innovation labs...

Enable people to share resources and access spaces already being heated & lit for multiple community uses.

Saving people money and reducing energy consumption.



We have **community growing** projects at several libraries and are working with partners to deliver **nature activities** for all ages.



6 libraries have water refill points helping reduce single use plastics.

22 staff are Green Champions. They volunteer to help their libraries become more sustainable and work towards our gold award.

The Library

BUILDINGS & ENERGY we will...

- 1) Support and advocate for the decarbonisation of library buildings and communicate about it
- 2) Raise awareness of energy saving measures and encourage positive staff behaviour change
- 3) Track and reduce our energy consumption (where it's within our operational control) and monitor the effect of different energy saving measures and new services like Open Plus.
- 4) Develop growing and nature projects in library gardens, exploring biodiversity, tree planting, wildflowers and rainwater collection with the GCC asset management team
- 5) Support and advocate for the roll out of water refill points and promote their use
- 6) Explore funding & permissions to install additional cycle stands
- 7) Utilise houseplants to improve indoor air quality and advocate for the use of sustainable materials, cleaning products and paints.

Decarbonisation of library buildings is outside of our direct operational control and falls to the Gloucestershire County Council asset management & property services team (AMPS). Some recent improvements have included retrofitting double glazing, insulation, heat pumps and solar PV.



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GCC have made a commitment to reduce corporate carbon emissions by 80% no later than 2030. Most library & registration buildings are part of their asset portfolio.

WASTE & RECYCLING

- 1) We will improve signage at recycling points and provide staff training to ensure staff and customers are aware of what can and can't be recycled. This will include raising awareness of the new workplace food waste collection service.
- 2) More robust and accessible public recycling bins will be explored and diversification of the recycling facilities available with potential to create secondary benefits/income
- 3) We will request data from Betterworld Books about the impact of book recycling
- 4) Waste management data will be requested from GCC asset management team (AMPS) so we can track progress of % recycling and aim to reduce general waste in kg. This data will help us asses the impact of our recycling initiatives.
- 5) We will explore the reinstatement of 3D printer filament recycling and potential for us to do this in house or via a local partner. When creating 'lab shop' products to sell the materials and lifecycle of the product will be considered.

We currently recycle batteries at many libraries as well as basics like plastic, paper and cans. We are exploring electrical cable and ink cartridge recycling options with local partners. Staff rooms now have food waste caddies and paper is reused multiple times where possible. Personal bins have been removed from desks and recycling bins are readily available in all working areas.

Libraries can also encourage recycling, raise awareness of what can be reused and signpost people to local services. For example community fridges, refill shops, scrap stores, repair cafes, recycling and composting facilities.



FLEET & MILEAGE we will...

- 1) Complete the successful transition to an electric fleet
- 2) Continue to review route optimisations and offer fuel efficient driver training
- 3) Allow time for staff to travel between locations by public transport and utilise online meetings to prevent the need for unnecessary travel.
- 4) Record mileage so we can calculate accurate fleet emissions and C02e savings.

Our small fleet of delivery vans are based ay our HQ in Oakley and make journeys between different libraries to facilitate reservations, return of books to their home site and stock rotation. Following route optimisation and fuel efficient driver training our yearly average mileage is about 22,650 miles. Having recently secured funding to transition to electric vans (supported by Gloucestershire County Council's Integrated Transport Unit)





DIGITAL we will...

- 1) An annual digital clean up campaign will be run to encourage staff to delete unwanted files, compress images and share links rather than attachments.
- 2) We will continue to improve our awareness of the impact of digital services, start a dialogue with our digital service suppliers and start reporting digital emissions if methodology and data becomes more readily available for our sector.
- 3) We will optimise the library website to reduce our emissions per page load such as deleting unused Java Scrips, resizing images and changing image formats.
- 4) Staff printing will continue to be monitored and (allowing for accessibility) colour printing will only being used when absolutely necessary.
- 5) Recycled paper will be used for all staff printing and as the main trype of paper available for public priiting and photocopying.
- 6) Digital energy saving practices and checks will be implemented like daily shut down routines, adjusting screen brightness and turning off monitors when not in use.
- 7) Review of ink cartridge recycling process will be undertaken with our new supplier

ICT equipment and systems are mostly managed centrally by GCC but there are some digital services within library control such as the library website and our contracts with Spydus library management system, the library app, virtual reference library and Borrowbox. Digital activity is emerging as the next frontier in the sustainability movement so as this area of our service grows it will become incresingly important for us to understand and monitor out impact.



PROCUREMENT we will...

- 1) Continue to implement relevant policies and impact assessment when undertaking procurement or tendering for contracts
- 2) Continue to work with suppliers and ask questions to ensure sustainable materials are being used whenever possible
- 3) Utilise second-hand furniture whenever possible, calculate and report positive climate impact and cost savings.
- 4) Use living plants, natural materials and themes that reflect the local landscape in future refurbishment design
- 5) Undertake research into the lifecycle and disposal of plastic book jackets. Library card materials will also be reviewed when next ordering supplies.
- 6) Review use of paper towels and substitute with zero waste options where possible
- 7) Refills and stationery made from sustainable materials should be considered when purchasing products to reduce single use plastics and prevent waste. Staff are encouraged to only order what they need.



Using second-hand furniture in recent refurbishments saved around £79,800 and avoided 3.4 tonnes of CO2e

ENGAGEMENT

How we empower communities to respond and adapt to climate change and the rising cost of living.



The Library

Community Consultation

We undertook an online survey, promoted in libraries and via our mailing list and also had paper tally sheets at 7 different libraries to capture feedback from our service users. 151 people responded online and we had almost 700 individual responses on paper to questions about travel and motivation.



It's important to us that this strategy is developed in response to community need and represents the preferences and interests of the people we serve.

We invited our service users, community partners and staff to help us shape our Greener Together strategy and action plan for the next 3 years.

Everyone is different so we asked what motivates people: weather it's saving money, protecting nature or cutting carbon emissions.

This survey will help us to:

- Prioritise what matters most to our service users
- Understand how local people feel about sustainability, nature & climate
- Develop relevant projects and activities
- Understand what would be a good fit for each library, reflecting the wide variety of communities we serve around Gloucestershire.
- Communicate in ways our service users prefer
- Give service users a chance to share their views and create solutions with us

KEY MOTIVATIONS

The online survey identified these top 4 motivations:

- 72% said reducing waste, repairing and sharing motivated them
- 60% would like to have access to a library of things
- 71% said protecting and connecting with **nature** motivated them
- 67% said **cost of living** motivated them

WHAT DID THE SURVEY TELL US?

- Climate change is of concern to 89% of our service users.
- 84% of people who responded are already using active or public transport to access their local library (with some regional variation in more rural locations).
- Cost of living and reducing waste were still considered motivating by people who were not otherwise concerned about climate change
- There is a significant demand for library of things or repair & share services in libraries.
- Nature activities were particularly popular with families.

KNOWLEDGE HUB



we will...

- 1) Support continuation of Greener Together Book Collection
- 2) Use books from the collection as inspiration for future events and activities that encourage hands on practical action and engagement.
- 3) Add more information and content to the digital screens & Greener Together webpage to help our service users locate information more easily. Move away from creating our own print materials where possible.
- 4) Include regular features about Greener Together via our newsletters and social media.
- 5) Provide information about relevant local services & groups (e.g. posters or leaflets about composting, food waste, recycling, energy saving, volunteering)

The Greener Together collection consists of more than 1,200 books & e-books spanning a range of topics and genres including non-fiction, fiction and poetry as well as practical guides to sustainable living. A special collection for children and young people is also available. Popular topics include nature, crafts, cookery and gardening books.

Library Strategy: "We will provide Greener Together stock collections and initiatives that promote Information and resources related to sustainable living, the environment and wildlife so that people can make informed choices."

We have over **6,400 books** in our Greener
Together Collection,
which includes many
of our most popular
non-fiction books



SHARE & REPAIR



we will...

- 1) Continue to support the Library of Things (LoT) at Charlton Kings as it evolves from a pilot project to become part of a larger county wide scheme
- 2) Explore working with a range of partners and volunteers to help us deliver more Libraries of Things across Gloucestershire, ensuring any locations are chosen strategically and in response to community need. We aim to establish a further 2 Library of Things projects in 2025-2026.
- **3)** Explore viability of repair café style events in libraries, starting with the trial of pop-up sewing repair & bike repair events. We will also research potential to create hybrid 'repair and share' or 'sharing space' events which might include swaps and skills workshops alongside repairs.
- 4) Improve signage and awareness of our water refill points and encourage people to reduce their use of single use plastics.
- **5)** Review efficacy of current recycling provision and explore the diversification of recycling points available in libraries, including working with community partners to introduce cable recycling.

Gloucestershire's first Library of Things is the result of a successful 1 year pilot project in partnership with sustainability charity Vision 21, their Planet Cheltenham project and Charlton Kings Parish Council. People can borrow every day items like drills, carpet cleaners and sewing machines instead of having to buy them.

402 items were loaned saving borrowers around £32,000 and 14.7 tonnes CO2e was avoided compared with buying new.



CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS



we will...

- 1) Engage with environmental awareness days and support GCC campaigns.
- **2)** Continue an open and inclusive dialogue about climate change, nature and environment. Give service users a chance to share their views and create solutions with us. Prioritise what matters most to our service users.
- **3)** Develop a book group toolkit as a way of engaging people with our Greener Together collection and making the link between reading, sharing ideas and taking practical action.
- **4)** Host a range of talks, workshops and events that align with wider annual engagement themes. For example: 2025 sharing, repairing and nature and 2026 skills, adaptation and creativity. Working with a range of partners.
- **5)** Explore opportunities to engage with service users aged 12-18 and develop activities that represent the voices and interests of young people. Supporting their wellbeing and being inclusive of those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

It's important our services reflect the preferences and interests of the communities we serve.

Library Strategy: "We will engage communities in activities, events and conversations that address the climate crisis to promote and affect change... and develop a programme of Environmental events to be delivered through the network of libraries."

Between April 2023 - April 2024 we hosted 131
Greener Together events attended by **1,200 groups and families**, working with 17 different partners.



ENERGY SAVING & ADAPTATION



we will...

- 1) Host energy saving and retrofit advice sessions working with district retrofit officers and energy charities. Provide access to digital & print information.
- 2) Provide thermal imaging cameras for loan in Forest of Dean libraries, working with Forest of Dean District Council and Vision 21.
- 3) Continue to support libraries as warm shared spaces, exploring how we can measure the impact and also help people to keep cool in summer
- **4)** Provide information about key topics like flooding, air quality and water use and act as community showcases (e.g. water butts, air purifying plants, cycling, solar PV)
- 5) Offer space for local non-political groups (flood wardens, retrofit support) to meet.

Libraries are well placed to build community resilience, accelerate the adoption of sustainable habits and support people to navigate rising energy prices & cost of living.

In Gloucestershire adaptation is urgently needed due to flood, drought and heat impacts, occurrences of which we have already seen all too regularly. River health and biodiversity are in decline and the longer term impacts of air pollution are becoming more apparent. Many houses are still poorly insulated and rising energy prices have created interest in retrofit and energy saving.

Libraries in the Forest of
Dean are trialling the
hire of thermal imaging
cameras in partnership
with Forest of Dean
district council



NATURE & GROWING

4

we will...

- 1) Work with partners like Project Grow and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to develop our gardens. Creating Nature Hubs and using them to encourage volunteering, support wellbeing, and produce food for the local community. We aim to work with local schools, food banks and social prescribers.
- 2) Continue to offer shared resources like plant and seed swaps and explore inclusion of more nature based library of things items (e.g. bat detectors)
- 3) Support tree planting and habitat creation in library gardens, working with property management teams to explore feasibility. Raise awareness of biodiversity week and no mow may.
- **4)** Continue to programme nature-based activities for children and families including the Natural World themed Library Challenge and Nature clubs.
- **5)** Host more outdoor activities using library gardens to support wellbeing and nature connection and offer gardening talks and workshops linking to books in the Greener Together collection.

Library Strategy: We will partner with local community groups to enhance and expand the use of the outdoor spaces - creating community gardens to support healthy living. We will also explore potential to plant trees and wildlife gardens within our library outdoor spaces.

We have gardening projects at Churchdown, Newent & Prestbury libraries and a wildflower meadow at Tetbury. New projects are being explored for Oakley & Hester's Way libraries.



CYCLING & ACTIVE TRAVEL we will...



- 1) Collect data about how customer travel to access libraries and measure impact including the introduction of voting tokens
- **2)** Explore development of bike maintenance and repair projects particularly at Matson and Tuffley Libraries or linked to local repair cafes
- **3)** Continue to work with GCC property team to work towards installation of additional cycle stands
- **4)** Support the GCC Think Travel team to promote Bikeability, Cycle September and host lead cycle rides at local libraries
- **5)** Work with the GCC Think Travel team to roll out e-Bike hire at Churchdown and Bishop's Cleeve libraries
- **6)** Ensure where possible our events are planned with access by active and public transport in mind (e.g. bus times)

689 people responded to our recent travel survey (online and via paper tally sheets located in 7 different libraries). Initial findings indicate the majority of our service users (84%) were already using active or public transport to access their local library with some rural variation.

The Library Strategy: "We will provide local access in communities- avoiding the need for people to travel to access wider council services"

In our recent survey **61%**of our service users
reported that they had
walked to the library, with
a further 9% cycling and
14% taking the bus.



CREATIVITY & MINDFULNESS



we will...

- 1) Link Greener Together events with our wider cultural and creative projects we run as an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation.
- **2)** Use arts & performances to engage and inspire people about environmental issues and find creative solutions
- **3)** Harness the power of arts, craft and craftivism to empower people to upcycle, remake, reimagine and express themselves creatively
- **4)** Introduce mindfulness to help people develop an awareness of their climate impact and deal with challenging emotions that may arise in response to the climate crisis
- 5) Use innovation labs creatively for Greener Together podcasts or multimedia projects

Creative thinking can help us find solutions and imagine a better future. Weather it's experimenting with natural materials, reimagining everyday items through creative upcycling or expressing our fears and frustrations; the arts provide a useful toolkit for exploring how we feel about climate, environment and nature in an inclusive way. It allows the motivations and aspirations of our communities to become seen, heard, tangible and collective.

Library Strategy: "We will use creative ways to tackle social issues"

Immersive performances can act as a catalyst for conversations, inspiring action toward a more sustainable future.

