

CLIMATE ACTION WORKING PARTY



Agenda Item:	Eco Fair 2026
Meeting Date:	Thursday 11 June 2026
Contact Officer:	Compliance and Environment Officer

The purpose of this report is to update the Climate Action Working Party on a proposed Eco Fair in Autumn 2026.

Background

The Climate & Biodiversity Committee meet on 19 May 2026 and agreed to several recommendations detailed in the report provided by the Compliance and Environment Officer. One of these recommendations is to consider a further Eco Fair in Autumn 2026, with the Climate Action Working Party further exploring the format, including the potential for a weekend event, and improved promotion and engagement opportunities.

Eco Fair 2025

The first Council Eco Fair took place in October 2025, supported by local organisations and officers from West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council. The event was held in the Main Hall of the Corn Exchange and was open to the public 9.30am – 3.00pm. Thirty-four organisations, including local businesses, charities and community groups, were invited to attend. Twelve took part, including West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC), Oxfordshire County Council, Community Transport and Low Carbon Hub. It was noted by officers that some of the invited community and charitable organisations that did not attend were present at other promotional events within the town organised by WODC e.g. Waterways Fair and Witney Volunteer Fair.

Officers promoted the loan of the Council's thermal imaging camera at the event which led to a number of positive enquiries from residents.

Witney Radio promoted the event and also interviewed a number of the stall holders.

Eco Fair 2026

Members of the Climate Action Working Party are now invited to consider the format and focus of this year's Eco Fair to inform further officer investigations. The event may be hosted by the Council in collaboration with partner organisations who are responsible for the main organisation and delivery.

There are merits of holding the event on a weekday or at a weekend. Weekday events may support attendance from partner organisations and council stakeholders, a weekend event could enable greater participation from residents, volunteers and smaller community groups.

Members of the Climate & Biodiversity Committee also suggested that climate and energy-focused organisations could be invited to attend existing “Councillors at the Café” sessions to further raise awareness of the Council’s climate objectives. The Climate Action Working Party are invited to suggest organisations to attend these sessions.

Next Steps

Climate Action Working Party deliverables for Eco Fair 2026 with support from officers are:

- Confirm a preferred weekday or weekend day event to enable officers to reserve the Main Hall, Corn Exchange for Autumn.
- Identify and invite relevant organisations and Council bodies. The Main Hall can accommodate 22 tables for this type of event.
- Discuss potential themes and audience (e.g., homeowners, residents, businesses).

Suggested Invitees (open for discussion and additional suggestions welcomed):

- **Local environmental groups** (e.g. Wild Oxfordshire, Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), Wychwood Forest Trust)
- **Local sustainable businesses** – showcase & promotions
- **Town Council** (e.g., biodiversity enhancements at Witney Lake and Country Park, Tiny Forest, Community Orchards, community litter picking initiatives and thermal imaging camera)
- **West Oxfordshire District Council** (e.g. recycling, composting, zero carbon toolkit, various grant availability, energy advice, biodiversity, Greenlight Hub)
- **Community repair/reuse organisations** (e.g. Witney shed, Apollos Clothing)
- **Transport and energy transition advocates** (e.g. Windrush Bike Project, Witney EV Car Club, Community Transport)
- **Witney Allotment Society**
- **Community Fridge**
- **Witney Food Revolution**
- **Witney Edible Gardens**
- **Witney Woodland Volunteers**
- **Witney Eco Forum**
- **Witney Flood Group**
- **WASP (Witney Against Sewage Pollution)**
- **Low Carbon Hub** (e.g. Thermal Imaging Camera, Grant Awareness, energy advice, warmer homes)
- **CAG Ox (Community Action Groups)**
- **Cherwell Collective**

Corporate Strategy

The Council’s Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council’s long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to ‘make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.’ This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

7. **A Green and Resilient Town** – Rooted in the Council’s 2019 Climate Emergency declaration, with a commitment to embedding environmental responsibility into all Council activities and achieving carbon neutrality by 2028.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council’s Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – The Eco Fair is expected to have a positive and equitable impact across all services, customers, and staff, delivering shared environmental and societal benefits.
- b) Biodiversity – The Eco Fair can include organisations that protect and restore biodiversity, which in turn can help with climate adaptation and mitigation
- c) Crime & Disorder - No direct crime and disorder impact with regards to the content of this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The information within the report will have a direct, positive impact on the Council’s plan for the wider positive benefits towards climate change mitigation and adaptation across the town.

Risk

In decision making Members should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Any recommendations from the Climate Action Working Party will be reported to the appropriate Committee and Full Council for approval.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. The Eco Fair is detailed within the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan which will have multi-dimensional impact across various areas including social, economic, and environmental benefits. Stakeholder engagement will be crucial including the public, communities, and local businesses. Consideration of the effects on local communities, including economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability will form the draft documents.

Financial Implications

There is no budget for the event. Request for a subsidised letting of the Corn Exchange will need to be considered by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Eco Fair 2026 - Members are invited to consider the format and focus of this year’s Eco Fair to guide further officer work and support a request for a subsidised letting at

the Corn Exchange. The event could be hosted by the Council in partnership with organisations responsible for its planning and delivery.

2. Councillors at the Café - Members are invited to consider using existing “Councillors at the Café” sessions to raise awareness of the Council’s climate objectives by:
 - inviting climate and energy-focused organisations to attend; and
 - to suggest suitable organisations.