

Green Libraries Survey Case Studies 2022

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#GreenLibraries

Introduction

The Green Libraries Partnership (GLP) is a multi-year research and development programme, established in 2022. Led by CILIP working together with Libraries Connected, the British Library and Julie's Bicycle, the partnership is funded by Arts Council England and chaired by Hampshire County Council's Assistant Director for Culture and Information Services.

The GLP was established in response to COP26 and the long-term climate commitments made by libraries and local authorities across England, drawing on the sector and environmental knowledge and expertise of the partners.

- Our **vision** is of a better future for planet and people, empowered and supported by librarians and library workers.
- Our **mission** is to place libraries at the heart of environmental change.
- Our **purpose** is to enable libraries to build environmental action within their communities.

Key partnership actions to date:

- [Green Libraries online hub](#) – sharing resources, knowledge, insights and case studies to inform and inspire sector action
- [Green Libraries Manifesto](#) - a shared set of commitments for libraries who want to lead by example through their own environmental actions and use their influence and reach to inform and inspire people to take positive action
- [Green Libraries Grants](#) – small grants totalling £40,000 awarded across 15 library services for environmental action and engagement projects in 2022

One of our main objectives in 2022 is to lay the ground for developing a UK-wide, cross-sector, longer-term programme to support public libraries in building environmental understanding and action themselves and with their communities. The Green Libraries Survey was done to inform this process, by developing an understanding of what public libraries are already doing to be green, what they would like to do and what would help make this possible. The 4 case studies below showcase some of the existing examples from the landscape of current work in libraries around environmental action.

CASE STUDY 01 - Hampshire Libraries

Playing its part in climate action and resilience, from county to community

Since declaring a climate emergency in 2019, Hampshire County Council set out two key aims: to be carbon neutral by 2050 and build resilience to the impacts of a 2 Degree Celsius global temperature rise. Its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2025 lays out how it will deliver on these aims. Each Council service has a role to play, including the Culture, Communities and Business Services (CCBS) department which has its own climate change programme lead. Hampshire Libraries is part of CCBS. Having undertaken work to establish how Council priorities translate to its libraries, it identified three priorities: reducing the environmental impact of properties and services; environmental education and engagement for staff and users, and; developing libraries as hubs for community resilience. These priorities have framed a range of new environmental measures.

Through its **eco excellent library** initiative, the service has developed a best practice model which it is trialling at one library. At the same time, it is developing a **climate change programme and roadmap**, setting priorities across its libraries, both quick wins and longer-term projects, identifying funding needs and establishing a timeline for action to 2030.

Hampshire Libraries has gathered environmental impact data for most of its libraries and is in the process of analysing this data, developing key indicators and a baseline against which to set improvement targets. At the same time, the Climate Lead, with support through the Council's climate change programme, is working on calculating the carbon footprint of the whole library estate.

The service has already undertaken a range of energy efficiency measures, with funding through the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and Salix, from installing energy efficient lighting and solar panels to replacing windows. Smart meters have been installed in all libraries and all library managers have access to the data, helping them better understand energy usage and the impact of their actions. The School's Library Service now has electric vehicles as part of their fleet and has launched a 'Library Renewals' site to recycle stock and furniture not required by schools or public libraries. Other ongoing environmental initiatives include:

- working with a local furniture recycling network;
- reviewing stock suppliers' environmental credentials;
- reducing plastic card usage, giving users the opportunity to switch from cards to an app, and;
- creating a climate change programme brand and communications strategy.

“I have observed a real commitment to Climate Change in branches across the County. Staff are committed to making changes however big or small and we are actively promoting our every small change counts campaign” Sam Marshall, Area Manager for the Central Libraries

Building staff confidence through engagement and training is a priority. The **climate change survey** carried out in 2021 focused on library service managers' views on how relevant climate action is to their roles, what they were already doing and what they would like to do. The results have helped shape the libraries' climate change programme and clearly showed library staff's enthusiasm and willingness to take action.

The service's three **Climate Champions** have done climate literacy training and climate change awareness-raising sessions have been rolled out to managers. Library managers and assistants are asked to reflect on one key thing they can do to support climate action as part of their annual appraisal process. The importance of **empowering people to be agents of change** has become clear – listening to what they have to say, understanding different viewpoints, sparking conversations that encourage people to take action and keeping the conversations going.

“This is a long-term project and we have to keep up momentum to make a difference. We are looking ahead with each project, how we can measure the difference it is making and adding a set of indicators to track progress. It is important for us to understand the data, set achievable targets and make credible claims.” Eve Marshall, Project Support Officer

Hampshire Libraries has been exploring **libraries' role as a source of information on climate change**, in particular making information accessible to groups not usually part of climate change conversations. They have identified four key factors which make it well-placed to do this: they are a trusted place for public access to free information; their reach into communities through strong local relationships and networks; the diversity of their library users, and; their significant social media and digital following.



Image: 'Earth Heroes' campaign banner/ Source: Hampshire Library Service

The service wants to develop the range of environmentally-themed books in its collection. In 2021, as part of the summer Reading Challenge, a collection of books for *Earth Heroes* was made available to help children learn about the environment and nature through stories, information on real-life climate heroes and simple but effective actions. Following this, to coincide with COP26, it launched a series of environmentally-themed digital publications for older children and teenagers and a collection of books for adults. In 2022, Hampshire Libraries *Earth Matters March* social media campaign gave daily tips on small changes to make at work or at home.

The service plans to continue **sparking environmental conversations with children and families**, delivering a range of events in 2023 bringing in external speakers and performance-based talks. It has been awarded a small grant under the [Green Libraries Grants](#) programme to develop environmental engagement and education activities for children, young people and families at all 40 libraries, including learning sessions with Southampton Scrapstore, a local recycling charity.

Hampshire Libraries is focusing on **developing libraries as hubs for community resilience**, working with community organisations to develop a new range of initiatives. Three libraries already provide spaces for community fridges and pantries, supporting basic needs and tackling food waste. These spaces have also been used to hold the Learning in Libraries programme, a range of courses (both free and paid, online and in person) on all kinds of topics, including zero waste, mending clothes and cooking with leftovers. This is something that Hampshire is hoping to continue and expand on in the coming years.

In partnership with Natural England, the *Nature Visuals* pilot project is being trialled at three libraries. This aims to connect communities in urban areas to nature, disadvantaged communities in particular, using a mapping process. At the same time, library staff will have 'nature connection' training from the Wildlife

Trust. This is a great example of how to pull together knowledge, networks and resources to create appealing, practical and place-based initiatives, offering opportunities for library users and communities to contribute to environmental discussions, activities and action.

CASE STUDY 02 - Oldham Libraries

A Library of Sanctuary connecting communities on climate justice

As a [Library of Sanctuary](#), Oldham Libraries welcomes refugees and asylum seekers to support them in becoming part of their local community. In May 2021, it was recognised with a *Library of Sanctuary* award under the [City of Sanctuary initiative](#). This followed a programme of activities by artists connected to refugee and migrant backgrounds in nine libraries across Oldham, Manchester and Bolton using creative community inclusion strategies focusing on climate change.

While the consequences of the climate crisis are making themselves known across the world, they are felt disproportionately by those communities which are least responsible and most disadvantaged, the communities most likely to be excluded from climate action conversations. Oldham Libraries' focus on climate justice, grew out of a collaboration with German libraries, under CILIP's Building Bridges programme. During this collaboration, it identified climate change as a relevant topic for refugees participating in library events and saw an opportunity for communities to creatively campaign for climate justice.

In 2020, Oldham connected with library partners in Bremen, Hamburg and Cologne – cities with similar patterns of immigration - to exchange knowledge, experience and resources to improve library services and experience for emerging and new communities. This partnership led to the establishment of a programme of climate change themed digital events and activities.

In 2021, Oldham Libraries partnered with Crossing Footprints - a Community Interest Company which generates creative production towards action for human rights, environment, equality and wellbeing – and Community Arts Northwest, to deliver the *Climate Connections* project. The main aim was to **raise awareness about climate change and enable diverse, migrant and working-class local people to have a voice in the climate movement**. The project engaged with Oldham Lifelong Learning groups, Fatima Women's Association in Oldham and Bremen's Arab Women Association. Engagement was done through a series of online and in-person creative workshops between April and July 2021. Through the workshops, participants explored the issues of climate emergency and environmental injustice and developed writing and digital skills to create content for social media. Content generated through an online competition and artist commissions was included in online exhibitions displayed in Bremen and Oldham libraries. The project concluded with the celebration of *Voices For Action* at Oldham Library, a one-day mini-festival, in person and online, about climate justice, the arts, debate and community connections.



Image: 'Voices For Action' banner, Source: Crossing Footprints

A full length live-stream of the event can be found [here](https://www.voices4action.eventbrite.co.uk))

Oldham Libraries is continuing its work to connect communities around the climate emergency. With funding from the National Lottery and in partnership with Crossing Footprints, the service will deliver a six-month programme of practitioner-led activities at Northmoor Library. Activities will include: art and gentle craftivism as educational tools for carbon literacy; spoken word; talks by climate experts, and; training sessions. The programme will culminate with a climate change themed play street event for families. It aims to encourage participants to both build resilience to local impacts and support the global connections they have, bringing together the community on the issue of climate change.

CASE STUDY 03 - Suffolk Libraries

Empowering library staff to lead on environmental action

Suffolk Libraries is an independent charity which runs Suffolk's library service. The service is community-owned with 45 library buildings across Suffolk, twelve prison libraries nationally, four mobile libraries and a workforce of over 400 staff and 1,000 volunteers. It is also an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. Over the last two years, a range of staff engagement initiatives has generated a new approach to environmental planning, action and change, with full support from the libraries' board and senior team.

Suffolk Libraries Community Arts Programme *Building Libraries on Creativity* (BLOC), running since 2018, focuses on developing libraries as accessible, creative community spaces where creativity is used as a catalyst for social change. As the programme evolved, the library service started connecting creative programming and environmental change. At the beginning of 2021 it commissioned Fox Yard Studio and Modece Architects to work with the local community to transform the courtyard of Stowmarket Library into a community garden. *Stitching Stowe* was funded by Arts Council England and Babergh Mid Suffolk Council. In October that year, Stowmarket Library officially opened its new **community garden space**, a space for wild flora and fauna, with bee-friendly planting, composting facilities, bird boxes and bug hotels, **designed to environmental principles**, using reused or recycled materials where possible.

The space is now more accessible for people with disabilities and includes several murals and works of art depicting the past, present and future of Stowmarket, inspired by stories provided by local people. The project was run in partnership with local charities, Red Gables, Men's Shed, and Thrive at The Mix, bringing experience and expertise in well-being, environmental conservation, and community engagement. Throughout the summer prior to its opening, the library hosted workshops to involve local people in transforming the space, including a sewing day, a painting day to create a colourful brick pathway (an abstract map of Stowmarket), as well as gardening and wildlife sessions. The project has not only created a new space for locals to enjoy, but has also provided opportunities to educate young people, community groups and library staff on practices that can increase biodiversity.



Image: the artists who contributed to the mural in Stowmarket Library's community garden / Source: Suffolk Libraries

Stitching Stowe's success sparked a range of new initiatives, most notably an **environmental grant programme**. The programme, part of a Continual Professional Development exercise, aimed to empower library staff to develop and lead environmental projects. Projects had to meet three key criteria: to nurture the community, to be environmentally sustainable and to contribute to nature and biodiversity conservation. 10 libraries were granted a small amount of money to further explore and develop their projects, from creating a wildlife highway to developing a family-friendly vegetable garden.

The grant programme not only generated new projects, it also highlighted staff enthusiasm and support for environmental change. This led to the creation of an **Environmental Sustainability Focus Group**, a staff-led group with CEO participation. Through the group, Suffolk developed an **environmental action plan** with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountability. Its [environmental action pledge](#) and [environmental policy](#) are publicly available and environmental plans and progress are now a standing item at Suffolk Libraries Board and Senior Leadership Team meetings and at local staff meetings. Looking forward, Suffolk hopes to progress to a more integrated approach on environmental planning and budgeting, by making environmental responsibility integral to every part of the service, as opposed to a separate strand, and thereby also a part of the general planning, purchasing and budgeting process. A primary example of this can be seen in the decision to switch to biodegradable library cards.

Suffolk is now looking to establish environmental groups in each library and recruiting staff **environmental champions** to help create a **Suffolk Libraries Environmental Roadmap**. Staff will help co-design an **environmental training** package available for staff and environmental sustainability has

been added as a category in quarterly staff recognition awards. Monthly communication led by the CEO goes out to all staff, recognising and showcasing small acts that have led to greater environmental change within the library service. Environmental responsibility is increasingly becoming a part of different roles and job descriptions across the service. Plans are underway to explore the creation of a dedicated environmental role to keep momentum up and help identify ongoing funding opportunities.

Collaboration with Suffolk County Council has been integral in connecting the libraries' actions with local climate change, nature and biodiversity priorities. For example, Suffolk Libraries is working closely with the Council to develop specific carbon reduction projects for its library buildings and has pledged to champion the Council's ambition to create the Greenest County. On a local level, it is in the initial phases of partnering with arts and cultural organisations in Ipswich (We Are Ipswich Partnership) to develop and adopt a **collective environmental strategy** and explore joint opportunities to deepen their collective impact.

"We are a massive estate, with a wide community reach. As such we believe we can make a really positive environmental contribution on the county level."

Melissa Matthews, Head of Audience Engagement

CASE STUDY 04 - Juraj Šižgorić City Library, Šibenik (Croatia)

Leading the way on environmental collaboration and citizen engagement

The Juraj Šižgorić city library, founded 100 years ago, is a library for people of all ages and walks of life located in the centre of Šibenik, a small city on the Adriatic coast rich in cultural and natural heritage and resources. The library first started on its environmental journey in 2013, when it joined a nationwide green libraries project, led by the Istrian Librarians' Association, and started organising environmentally themed events for adults and children. Its involvement in a European cities' network from 2019, was another key step in its journey which saw it take a lead on environmental engagement through its work with its own library community, the city's arts and culture sector and the city administration.



Photo: Juraj Šižgorić library – in the centre of Šibenik on the site of the original library founded in 1922,

Source: Dobar Skroz via WikiCommons

Between 2019 and 2021, Šibenik was one of six cities involved in the [C-Change](#) network, working on city-based approaches to cultural collaboration on climate action and engagement based on [Manchester Arts Sustainability Team's](#) model. As a city already feeling the consequences of climate change – rising sea levels, flooding and forest fires – which understood the importance of protecting its natural and cultural heritage and resources, Šibenik saw its participation in C-Change as an opportunity to engage with its citizens on climate change through culture and creativity.

After a series of C-Change learning and exchange sessions, each partner city established a local C-Change group. This was to be the starting point for bringing the arts and culture sector in the city together on climate action and engagement. Šibenik's local group started in 2019 with about 10 members, mainly city-run cultural organisations, and was led by the city's Department of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Development (DEED). The Juraj Šižgorić library was involved from the start. After a few months, the library's Ana Šimić took on the role of group coordinator and the group evolved to become more of a mix of city-run and independent cultural and creative organisations, developing a range of environmental engagement activities.



Image: Šibenik's local C-Change group

Ana was one of three people from Šibenik who did a study visit to Manchester in late 2019, to see the Manchester model in practice, exchange with representatives of the other partner cities, and join them in getting a taste of Manchester's Carbon Literacy Training for culture.

Throughout C-Change, the city library played a key role in bringing culture in the city together, despite many Covid-related setbacks and restrictions. In autumn 2020, as Covid restrictions were eased, it hosted a **carbon literacy training** for a mix of people from the culture sector, Šibenik Polytechnic and the municipality. The training was designed and led by Ivana Kordić, an environmental activist and member of the local Zlarin 'plastic free island' initiative. It was accredited by the Manchester-based Carbon Literacy Project. The training was perfect timing for the library to launch its new **environmental book collection**.

The library played a key role with the C-Change local group in planning and delivering a **C-Change festival** in 2020. Ten events took place over thirty days, from environmental street art and an installation on sea-level rise to pop-up environmental book stands and a talk by the Library Association on plastic pollution for Šibenik Polytechnic students. Despite Covid, the festival activities and events were a huge success and the library has made the pop-up environmental book stands an annual event.

The library ran a one of the three C-Change pilot actions itself in 2020, engaging over 600 people and leading to a range of follow-up initiatives. The Zeleno Volim / I Love Green series involved practical workshops on composting, homemade natural cosmetics and fashion upcycling. This was funded by a micro grant under the C-Change project. It also held three environmental talks in local high schools as

well as a competition for primary school students to design posters on the topic of environmental protection. The entries were displayed in an exhibition at the library as part of the C-Change Festival.

These initiatives attracted a lot of publicity and media interest, and provided a great opportunity to demonstrate the vital role that libraries can play in making environmental information and education accessible to the public, raising awareness and influencing behaviour change. The city library was a runner up for IFLA's (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) Green Library Project Award in 2020 in recognition of its engagement "with its community beyond green building and library collections, to programmes that enhance mental and physical well-being".

"C-Change was a learning experience. We learnt that small acts can lead to big change - it is not a cliché. Working together – the cultural sector, Šibenik Polytechnic and the city – we brought public attention to the issue of climate change and raised awareness about the positive steps we can take. And we were also able to exchange and develop ideas within our group. It has made us much more aware of where we are now and what the possibilities for the future are". Ana Šimić, Šibenik City Library

You can see Ana talking about the city library's role in C-Change [here](#).

For more information on the Green Libraries Partnership and to read the full survey report visit www.cilip.org.uk/GreenLibraries