

Green Elmbridge

About us - Green Elmbridge was established in November 2022, having grown out of a network of community-based groups that had previously offered advice/support to Elmbridge Borough Council as it worked towards its declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019.

Our primary purpose is to provide a means by which the many community and voluntary sector groups that operate in Elmbridge - and which are involved in caring for the environment and/or addressing the climate emergency - can share information, promote their work, and learn from each other.



A key feature of our activities and promotional work is to raise peoples' awareness of the climate emergency and help them adopt lifestyle changes that will help to reduce their local and global carbon footprint whilst at the same time caring for our local environment.

Our Approach - Elmbridge based community and not-for-profit groups who share our aims are welcome to sign up and become voting members of Green Elmbridge, whilst commercial businesses (who share our ethos) may apply to become 'supporter organisations'.

Our activities are coordinated by a Steering Group of representatives from member groups, whilst actively welcoming the skills and support offered by others!



Sustainability Fairs - We have held two large Sustainability Fairs in partnership with, and hosted by, the Riverhouse Barn Community Arts Centre in Walton-on-Thames.

<https://riverhousebarn.co.uk/>. Green Elmbridge steering group and Riverhouse Barn staff worked closely together to promote and organise the event.

At our most recent one, in June 2023, over 300 people took the opportunity to find out more about the work of local environmental groups and small businesses, and hear from a range of speakers including Jo Taylor (Climate Change Support Officer at Elmbridge BC), Chris Hyde



(Surrey Climate Commission and Talking Trees), Ben McCallan (Surrey Greener Future team), Lizzy Harley and Ashley Barrell (Parents for Future), Anita Chanda (Artist), and Kate Ray (Guided By Nature).

Groups present and activities included: plant swap station; willow crafting workshop; bug hotel building; compost clinic; repair café; Elmbridge Community Eco Hub; Oxshott Net Zero; Thames Ditton Boomerang Bags; Molesey Clothes Exchange; Elmbridge Tree Wardens; Green Gym (Guided Wellbeing); Ashley School; Riverhouse Community Café; Brooklands college; Island Farm Community Garden (West Molesey); Elmbridge Cloth Club; Parents for Future and many others including local green minded businesses - a total of 30 stalls. (see the 'Fair Highlights' video included further below).

One of the highlights was the very well attended performance by local children's environmental choir 'We Are the Voice' <https://www.wearethevoice.org.uk/>.



Link to video produced by Brooklands College Creative Media students and their tutor: <https://youtu.be/HeydITyLJkM>

Website - Central to our aim of improving communication about environmental projects and opportunities within Elmbridge has been the establishment of a website – which we created with the help of students and staff from Brooklands College.
<https://www.greenelmbridge.org.uk/>

Local groups are able to promote their work here – <https://www.greenelmbridge.org.uk/green-elmbridge> and advertise forthcoming events <https://www.greenelmbridge.org.uk/events>

Going forward we hope that the website will host short articles and information about topical environmental issues.

Climate Cafes - We aim to run free quarterly Climate Cafes at various venues across the Borough. Our first Café in February was held in Esher at the Quaker Meeting House and welcomed over 50 members of the public, and featured guest speaker Robyn Shaw from the South East Rivers Trust. Robyn spoke about the challenges that rivers face (in particular the River Mole), the varied ways to bring them back to life, and how to preserve our precious fresh water supplies.



Sarah Nuttall
February 9 · 10
So lovely to meet Robyn from South East Rivers Trust at Green Elmbridge's Climate Cafe last night. Great ideas of ways to bring our rivers back to life, and to preserve our precious fresh water supplies.

This was followed by our arranging for speakers from Path Financial* to come along to the '[Oxshott Net Zero Village Day](#)' in April, where we hosted a lively discussion about protect the planet using ethical investments and savings. (*an Independent Financial Advice firm devoted to tackling climate change by helping people cut through the “greenwash” to invest their money with purpose).



Funding - Funding from the Surrey Climate Commission ‘small grants fund’ has allowed us to maintain our website for the coming year, and purchase two information/promotional sign boards (made of recycled materials) which will help us better advertise our events and direct participants to them.

Challenges and learning – In organising the Sustainability Fair 2023 we benefited from working closely with an established venue such as the Riverhouse Barn; we shared administrative and promotional tasks, we had the community café on site and had Riverhouse Barn staff and volunteers to support the event. All stall holders were asked to spread the word about the Fair though their networks and social media. Our joint promotion worked well and the Fair was attended by new visitors as well as Barn regulars. Having the ‘We Are The Voice’ Childrens Environmental Choir performing as a highlight also helped boost numbers especially of young families. We have since noted that collaboration between groups has continued beyond the event with various groups starting to work together on some projects; e.g. Fair Play Clothing and Guided by Nature or the Choir and Parents for Future. What didn’t go as hoped for was attendance at the talks which was very varied; it was a lovely day and many preferred to stroll amongst the stalls. We will rethink the balance of speakers to stalls. Also, we had not appreciated that there were competing events locally e.g. one of the local schools had their own summer fair on the same day. That said, our decision to hold our event on the 17th was partly influenced by needing to be during ‘The Great Big Green Week’ as well as by availability of the Barn as a venue. Finally, we were short of car park marshalling volunteers on the day and should have secured these volunteers earlier on. Luckily all was well.

In more general terms, all our steering group members are active members of local groups and therefore already very busy with other commitments. This has meant that GE can not achieve all its goals at the same time. We need to increase our pool of steering group people and skills’ set (e.g. social media know how). We have developed a Communications Strategy document which has identified a list of tasks for us to undertake and we have agreed that in order to sustain our efforts and take care of ourselves, we need to set ourselves realistic goals each year. We are coming up to our 1st AGM in October and will use this as an opportunity to review the year and acknowledge ‘what we have done’ rather than ‘what we have not’.

Near future next steps – We hope to hold another climate café before the end of the year and are in conversation with the Borough Council who are planning to organise an



event for community groups to share ideas and understand how best the Council and community groups can work together to amplify impact.

Contact details:

 greenelmbridge@gmail.com

 [Green Elmbridge FB page](#)

 [Green Elmbridge](#)