Together Towards Zero Showcase Book Text Only Version

# Brent Community Climate Action Showcase Book.

Thirteen examples of projects being carried out in the community to tackle climate change in Brent.

# Foreword.

Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure, and Climate Action, said: “We declared a Climate

and Ecological Emergency in 2019, because it is important that we tackle head on the causes of climate change which we have only seen get worse over recent years. That is why we have the ambitious target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. We are taking action and need help from all members of the community if we are going to reach this target. This book showcases local groups that have used the Brent Together Towards Zero Community Grant to help protect the planet. These grants are a great way of putting climate action into the hands of residents and empowers communities to make their spaces greener, cleaner and more environmentally friendly. I would like to thank all the local groups and residents who work so hard to make Brent such a nice place to live and are working tirelessly in the fight against climate change”.

# The Brent Together Towards Zero Community Grant Scheme.

In early 2022, Brent Council launched a community grant fund called Brent Together Towards Zero to provide financial support to communities improving their local areas by making them greener, cleaner and more environmentally friendly. So far, the grant scheme has awarded funding to 55 projects across the borough. A wide range of projects have been supported, such as bike repair drop-ins, educational workshops, energy efficiency schemes and greening initiatives, but all are in support of the objectives set out in Brent’s Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. The council plan to run several rounds of the grant scheme and welcome applications from individuals with the support of their community or established community groups. Applications can be made up to the value of £5,000 for one-off projects and initiatives to tackle the climate and ecological emergency. You can find out more about how to apply and grant application windows by checking the Brent Council website.

The aim of this book is to showcase some of the fantastic projects that have been carried out by communities across Brent, all supported by the Brent Together Towards Zero Community Grant Scheme. We hope that the book inspires more people to get involved in the climate action movement, and don’t forget – you can sign up to the Brent Environmental Network for monthly updates packed with ideas and practical tips for reducing your environmental impact, as well as more inspiring stories from local people who are taking on the climate emergency.

The thirteen projects are listed under one of four categories:

Greening and biodiversity, Active travel, Education and Waste reduction & upcycling.

# Tackling Climate Change Starts Local.

We know that the issue of climate change is global, and the mounting toll of extreme weather events, from fires raging out of control to floods devastating whole communities, show that the threat is real and present. International and national

policy to reach net zero is vital but can feel quite distant and difficult to influence. By focussing on what climate change means for specific places and groups of people, we can begin to shift our view of tackling climate change from a challenge which is overwhelming to something that is more tangible.

The aim of the Brent Together Towards Zero grant scheme is to unlock the potential of communities to meaningfully address climate change as it manifests in their own lives and build a movement of climate action from the ground up. By thinking locally, we can build an array of small actions that culminate in significant change overall.

Additionally, we know that tackling climate change means different things to different people. Empowering local communities through our Together Towards Zero grant scheme is one of the ways we are supporting communities to take action by starting with what matters most to them. Taking steps to become more eco-friendly can have many benefits alongside carbon reductions, including making a place safer for walking and cycling, having better access to nature, reducing energy bills, and creating healthier places to live.

# Cricklewood Gardens Project with Ashford Place.

Ashford Place is a local community charity intent on doing their bit to help the borough achieve its goal of becoming the most green and biodiverse borough in London.

The charity’s Cricklewood Gardens Project aimed to support local residents to have improved access to clear and understandable information on the need to tackle climate and ecological emergency, including a particular focus on environmental education for older people, black, ethnic and minority backgrounds and those with mental and physical disabilities.

As part of the project, they installed three rainwater recycling butts and a soil composter, hosted three plant potting sessions and held educational sessions where participants were asked to make ‘green pledges’ for reducing their own carbon footprint.

Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum and partners (Forest and Family, Roundwood Park Lodge café) cleaned up and enhanced the unused space surrounding Roundwood Park Lodge café, transforming it into a welcoming community space and edible garden with a new organic waste composting system.

The project involved a series of community education workshops on topics such as gardening, wildlife pollinators, upcycling, eco-therapy, climate resilience and more. It also involved the refurbishment of the space, removing waste, building an edible garden, planting five fruit trees and incorporating a rainwater harvesting system used to water plants in the spring and summer.

The space is now managed by a gardening club established by Forest and Family, running every Thursday from 10 am to 12 pm.

# Vertical Vegetable Garden with Clube dos Brasileirinhos.

Clube dos Brasileirinhos worked with a group of children age 3 – 16 to create vertical vegetable and herbs gardens in their houses and flats.

They hosted workshops on how to create a vertical vegetable garden using recycled materials that can be kept and looked after inside the home. Each participant was provided with the basics to start their own vegetable garden, including seeds, paper cups, instructions and a diary to keep records.

Emphasis was placed on teaching young people the importance of thinking about where their food comes from and trying to ‘eat local’ to reduce their carbon footprint.

# Wooden Raised Planting Beds with Friends of Harlesden Town Garden.

Friends of Harlesden Town Garden used its funding to replace worn out planting beds to ensure the continued opportunity for community food growing.

Two of the planting beds are now used by Crisis, the homeless charity, for its members to grow vegetables at weekly training sessions. Additionally, one of the beds is reserved for Green Club training and there are raised beds which are much more accessible to those with a disability.

The planting beds are now lined and built with good quality seasoned and hard wood sleepers designed to give strength and durability.

# Greening the High Street with Willesden Green Town Team.

Willesden Green Town Team organised a street greening event in June 2022. All of the group’s gardeners were in attendance as well as some surrounding shop keepers. Members of the community came to support by setting up cake stalls and handing out leaflets, and Willesden Green Councillor Saqlain Choudry paid a visit to see the group in action and show his support.

The local community gave positive feedback about the project, saying “It’s been so wonderful to see the planters go up outside the station, really makes a difference to the first impressions people get of arriving into Willesden Green!”

# The Importance of Biodiversity.

The climate and the ecological emergency are two interrelated issues, and we cannot tackle one without addressing the other. The ecological emergency refers to the severe degradation of the natural environment and loss of wildlife caused by human activity over the past few decades, and the urgent need to take restorative action.

Biodiversity is all the different kinds of life you’ll find in an area. From plants to animals and even smaller organisms like bacteria, all work together in ecosystems, to maintain balance and support life. Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive. For example, we rely on healthy ecosystems to provide us with the air we breathe and the food we eat. But as humans put increasing pressure on the planet, we are upsetting the balance of ecosystems and losing biodiversity.

This is why Brent have set the ambitious target of making Brent the greenest borough in London by 2030. Achieving this target will take the involvement of everyone in Brent; residents, schools, businesses and visitors.

Our Together Towards Zero Community Grant is one way we can work together to take action on creating a greener, more biodiverse borough, and protect Brent’s ecosystems for generations to come.

# Community Bike Repair Shed with Cycletastic.

The Cycletastic Community bike shed has been in operation since May 2015, offering affordable puncture repair and bike maintenance to residents in the Kilburn area of Brent. With Together Towards Zero Grant funding, Cycletastic were able to offer a free bike/scooter tyre and inner tube recycling service to anyone in the locality needing to dispose of worn out tyres. The aim was to prevent the worn out tyres and inner tubes going to landfill, as normally happens with worn out tyres.

Cycletastic also regularly provide free Dr Bike events to local residents and their community of volunteers offer assistance to anyone wanting to know how to repair their bicycle.

# Dr Bike Support with Cricklewood Town Team.

Cricklewood Town Team organised a Dr Bike repair pop-up as part of their ECO Saturday event, which included stalls on creative reuse of materials, advice on recycling from Veolia, public health advice and children’s entertainment. In total, 14 bikes were mended on the day and 2 were donated for complete repair and allocation to a local resident.

The project aimed to encourage more people to ‘think bike’ and alleviate concerns as to whether a bike is fit for purpose. There was a particular focus on helping younger people understand how to make simple repairs to keep their bike in working order.

# Co-Benefits of Walking and Cycling.

Not only is walking and cycling a great low-carbon means of getting around, but it brings with it many health and wellbeing benefits too.

Research shows that keeping physically active can reduce the risk of heart and circulatory disease by as much as 35%. By swapping short car journeys with cycling or walking, we can easily build exercise into daily routines and reap the health benefits.

Getting out walking or cycling can also lift our mood, giving us time to clear our thoughts. Time spent outdoors has been shown to have a positive impact on our mental health.

Not only this, but walking and cycling can be an efficient and affordable means of getting around. In areas dominated by traffic, it’s often the quickest and cheapest way of getting where we want to be.

Our Together Towards Zero Community Grant is open to applications for projects that encourage walking and cycling, raising awareness of the benefits and supporting Brent residents to feel confident when riding a bike.

# Welsh Harp Guided Walks with Residents at Birchen Grove.

Local history expert Irina Porter and mindfulness practitioner Christine Coker delivered a series of guided walks around the Welsh Harp Reservoir and Open Space.

The project aimed to promote enjoyment and appreciation of nature by helping participants to understand the importance of ecology issues in their local spaces. The project specifically aimed to attract people of any age and any ability and was designed to be relevant and accessible to people of different ethnic backgrounds and those with mental or physical and mental disabilities.

# Dance 2 Zero with The Michelle Bourne Dance Academy.

Dance 2 Zero is a project for school children and aims to educate them on the benefits of lowering emissions, recycling and reusing waste through fun and exciting dance lessons.

Through creative means, the project educates young people about the consequences of not looking after our environment whilst teaching them constructive ways and methods of recycling, reusing and reducing waste.

# Eco-themed Street Party with Residents at Olive Road

Residents of Olive Road used the Together Towards Zero grant funding to promote climate change awareness in the local community at a street party event being held to celebrate the Queen’s Jubilee. They did this by having an eco-stall providing insight, practical advice and expertise on home insulation, EPC ratings and simple ways residents can reduce their carbon footprint.

As part of the celebration, they organised a bike repair pop-up, who was able to check and repair a total of 12 bikes on the day.

There was also a talk from a local beekeeper about the importance of bees and other pollinators and their positive impact on the environment.

# Stories That Matter.

By sharing these examples of local communities taking climate action, we hope to inspire more people to become involved in tackling the climate and ecological emergency in Brent.

The projects showcased in this book demonstrate what is possible when communities come together. Transitioning to a sustainable and equitable society that both preserves and protects our natural ecosystems will take the involvement of everyone in Brent. No contribution is too small to make a difference and new ideas are always welcome.

Taking action on climate means many different things to different people. Our Brent Together Towards Zero grant aims to provide support for communities working to address the climate emergency on their own terms, and often has the additional benefit of bringing communities together.

# St Raphael’s Community composting scheme with Sufra NW London.

Sufra NW London developed a community composting and waste reduction project hosted at its community garden on St. Raphael’s Estate in Stonebridge.

This project saw Sufra establish links with four local primary schools who visited the garden to learn more about composting and the importance of healthy soil.

As well as reducing the level of waste produced by the nearby foodbank, the project also encouraged local community members, gardeners, and businesses to donate their compostable materials to the project. Sufra now compost at least 240 litres of food waste which can be turned into 25 litres of healthy soil in 6 months.

# Ultra Cycling with Ultra Education.

Ultra Education used funding from the Together Towards Zero grant scheme to deliver an impactful environmental project aimed at young people aged 11-16, primarily in targeted areas of Stonebridge, Wembley and Harlesden.

The project used the idea of sustainable fashion to increase young people’s knowledge of individual and community effects on the environment, and how they can reduce this.

They worked with a total of 23 young people on a sustainable fashion project, highlighting the importance of protecting the environment by buying less and using waste to create sustainable packaging. The project culminated in a Fashion Show hosted at Wembley Stadium.

# The Fast Fashion Project with WE RESTART.

The Fast Fashion project organised by WE RESTART focussed on raising awareness of how our daily fashion choices and habits can have a harmful impact on the environment, as well as contributing to human rights violations.

The project worked with a group of Brent residents who modelled garments bought in local charity shops. Professional photographer (and Brent resident) Carolina Rapezzi generously gave her time to participate in the project and is credited for the photos. The photos produced have been exhibited in the windows of local charity shops and other venues.

The second part of the project involved a community screening of “The True Cost” film at the Lexi Cinema, followed by a panel discussion where residents learned about and discussed possible solutions to the issue of fast fashion.

Overview of the four categories of project presented in the book: Greening and biodiversity, Active travel, Education and Waste reduction & upcycling.

This collection of stories demonstrating Community Climate Action in Brent is brought to you by Brent Council. The book illustrates the many ways we can come together to make a difference. All of the projects included in this book have received support as part of the Brent Together Towards Zero grant. By sharing these examples we hope to inspire further community climate action that will help Brent move towards its goal of becoming a net zero, green and biodiverse borough, in a transition that is led by and for its communities.

A special thank you to each of the thirteen projects who are included in this book. Your work is inspiring a legacy of climate action.