

Report title	Great Big Green Week: Summary of participation in 2023, and level of involvement sought in 2024
Report author	Paul Wade, Planning Policy Officer
Department	Planning, Economy and Built Environment
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	Not applicable
Reasons for exemption	Not applicable

Purpose of report:

In part-For information
In part-To resolve

Synopsis of report:

This report summarises the Council’s participation in the 2023 Great Big Green Week (GBGW), considers which elements were the most and least successful as well as lessons learnt.

The report also asks the Committee to agree the level of participation that it would like to see from the Council during the 2024 GBGW, subject to sufficient funding being secured.

Recommendation(s):

Corporate Management Committee is asked to:

- 1. NOTE the information provided on the Council’s participation during the 2023 Great Big Green Week.**
- 2. AGREE the level of involvement that the Council should have during the 2024 Great Big Green Week . The different options are as follows:**
 - Option 1: Support and promote**
 - Option 2: Support, promote and coordinate**
 - Option 3: Support, promote, co-ordinate and provide assistance**
 - Option 4: Support, promote, co-ordinate, provide assistance and participate (please note that the ‘participation’ element of this option is currently unfunded)**

1. Context and background of report

1.1 The Climate Coalition is the operating name of the Climate Movement – Registered Charity No. 1109973.

- 1.2 The main purpose of the organisation is to influence decision makers by bringing people together across society to unify and amplify voices, showing the broad support for climate action across the UK. They aim to highlight all the things supporters want to protect from climate change, and to call on politicians to put aside their differences and commit to doing whatever is necessary to protect them.
- 1.3 The Climate Coalition has, since 2021 organised an annual Great Big Green Week where local groups and organisations across the country are encouraged to run community events split between Local Green Weeks across the country to celebrate how communities are taking action to tackle climate change and protect green spaces.
- 1.4 At February Corporate Management Committee, it was agreed that during the 2023 Great Big Green Week, the Council would:

-Support and promote the Great Big Green Week by encouraging uptake and participation by residents and local community groups;

- Co-ordinate a 'Runnymede Local Green Week' by registering it on the Great Big Green Week website as an overarching Borough based event;

- Provide support where practical and within the Council's remit if approached by local groups or residents who wanted to put on an event;

-Run its own series of events during the course of the week with the aims of:

- Bringing together and engaging with our residents (including our young people) and businesses on the important issue of climate change;
- Celebrating local climate change initiatives and encouraging more people and organisations to develop their own initiatives;
- Raising the profile of the Council's response to climate change;
- Providing useful information and signposting other relevant organisations to give people the tools they need to help the Borough transition to net zero carbon by 2050.

2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended

- 2.1 This section is split into two parts; the first considers the Council's participation in the 2023 Great Big Green Week and reflects on the relative success of different events and lessons learnt. The second part of section 2 considers the 2024 Great Big Green Week and the different options for involvement. Officers request that the Committee confirms the level of involvement that it would like to see from the Council next year, subject to the available funding being secured.

Great Big Green Week 2023-summary of participation and feedback

- 2.2 This year, the Great Big Green Week ran between the 10th and 18th June with the intention to build on the successes of the previous two years. Runnymede Borough Council coordinated a Local Green Week, organised a series of events consistent with the ethos of GBGW and also encouraged partners to run their own events. Events were spread around the Borough geographically and involved a range of contributors. The intention was to create a diverse portfolio of events which had the potential to appeal to a large cross-section of the local population and maximise engagement.
- 2.3 Local events were publicised on the Council's website, uploaded to the GBGW website and publicised on social media by members of the Council's

Communications team. Officers have since been made aware that there was an issue with the GBGW website whereby the search function did not enable users to find events in their area. This was a national issue and the Climate Coalition are working to address this ahead of the 2024 GBGW.

- 2.4 The different events that the Council delivered are set out below, along with a summary of the events run by partners.

Egham Environment and Sustainability Day and Vegan Market

- 2.5 This event was arranged by the Council and focussed on the themes of sustainability, nature preservation and climate change action. It comprised Egham regulars, the Ethical Vegan Market, and stalls on Egham High Street hosted by different environmental, community and nature-based organisations. The aim was to provide a fun and engaging day out for the local community, celebrating environmental action that is taking place locally, sharing information and encouraging participation. Stall holders included the River Thames Scheme, Runnymede Borough Council (RBC), Holme Farm, Surrey County Council (SCC), Egham Tree Watch, Surrey Greenpeace Group and Brooklands College. Some organisations approached including the Surrey Wildlife Trust were unable to attend due to insufficient notice being given.
- 2.6 The Council also invited two organisations to attend the event who provided interactive content. The first was Electric Pedals who show how kinetic energy, in this case bicycles, can be used to power household appliances. The second was Brickies Club who provide education through the medium of play, predominantly using Lego. The intention was to use Brickies Club to encourage younger children to contribute to building an eco-city throughout the event. Whilst officers were pleased with both suppliers, given the lower than expected turnout, it is considered that these interactive elements were not as well utilised as hoped. Attendance may have been affected by a number of factors, for example, the weather was warmer than expected, with June 10th being the warmest day of the year to date. This may have deterred attendees. The annual Shepperton Village Fair also took place on the same day which is believed may have attracted residents from Runnymede.
- 2.7 It is estimated that RBC staff spoke to approximately 30 residents about a range of issues, although some of these were not exclusively environmental in nature. The RBC stall was positioned immediately next to SCC which proved advantageous as some of the issues raised fell under the mandate of SCC. The proximity between the two stalls allowed residents to be directed between stalls as appropriate in order to answer queries effectively. There was however a greater separation between these two stalls and the remaining stalls. Officers are of the view that this had a detrimental impact on the cohesiveness of the event.
- 2.8 Officers have reflected that more information/visual material could have been used to advertise the event and to direct residents between the different events taking place in Egham on the same day to increase footfall.
- 2.9 In this regard, a litter picking event was also arranged by Cllr Sam Jenkins on 10th June where a group of residents cleared litter in the area of Hummer Road, Runnymede Road, Crown Street and Egham Library. A range of activities including a Community Fridge and Really Free Market were additionally arranged by St Johns Egham Eco Church situated at the top of Egham High Street (the Council was not involved in the organisation of these events). There was also an event running for part of the day at Egham Library.

2.10 Another option for running this type of market stall style event in the future could be to incorporate it into a larger, established event which already runs in the Borough, even if this does not occur during the Great Big Green Week itself. This is because, a larger event is considered to offer greater footfall opportunities. There are a number of fairs which take place between June and August annually which each attract much higher visitor numbers. These include (amongst others):

- Egham Royal Show
- Chertsey Black Cherry Fair
- Chertsey Agricultural Show
- Englefield Green Village Fair

2.11 It could be explored whether a 'Green Quarter' could become part of such an event with various stalls and activities included to engage the public on the topic of climate change.

Library Events

2.12 The Council engaged with Surrey County Council (SCC) and made them aware of the GBGW. As a result, SCC arranged a series of events within Addlestone, Chertsey and Egham libraries during the course of the week. These events were fully funded by SCC and could broadly be broken into two main groups.

2.13 The first stream of events focused on environmental literature aimed at children. This involved SCC paying for the authors of titles within this genre to visit the libraries and read their books to an audience, with other environmental literature titles displayed in prominent locations within the libraries. In total, three of these events were organised with one taking place at each library. Unfortunately attendance at these events was relatively limited with approximately 20 individuals attending in total.

2.14 The second stream of events was more interactive and involved upcycling bird feeders, seed planting, a green themed treasure trail and incorporating crafts into the libraries' regularly scheduled rhymetime and storytime events. The seed planting event was the best attended with 16 children and accompanying parents/guardians taking part. The themed rhymetime and storytime events had eight and nine attendees respectively but were all regular events which occur at the library in any instance.

2.15 There are a number of possible reasons as to why these events may have struggled, for instance two of the book readings took place on 10th June. This, as discussed above, was the hottest day of the year to that point and this may have had an impact on attendance. There were also a number of other events running locally on this date (as discussed earlier in this report). Also, only one of the library events was advertised on RBC's printed material which may have had some impact although all of the library events were advertised on all other platforms (social media and the Council's website). The most frequently cited issue though was the lack of lead in time with events coming together quite late which would have had an impact on the ability to market them effectively.

2.16 The issues of attendance notwithstanding, SCC and library managers have stated that they would be very keen to work with RBC as part of the GBGW in 2024. There have also been additional activities suggested (such as foraging) and it has also been suggested that there might be the potential to allocate a day to GBGW where

multiple activities can take place on the same day to maximise impact and attendance. There might also be potential to use authors in time slots allocated to regular book readings as opposed to creating new bespoke sessions. It is felt that the issue of the short time frame to arrange the events can be overcome in 2024 as SCC is now aware of the GBGW following their involvement this year, and the dates for the 2024 GBGW have already been released giving SCC plenty of time to plan their events.

Educational Events

- 2.17 The Council collaborated with Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL) in producing a panel event titled 'How responding to the global threat of climate change is being translated at a local level'. The contributors for this were senior officers from RBC, academics in related disciplines at RHUL and the Cabinet Member for the Environment at SCC. This event had a relatively modest attendance. Attendees were typically academics or local councillors from Runnymede and the surrounding area.
- 2.18 The lack of student engagement can largely be attributed to the timing of the event. This event took place on Monday 5th June with the RHUL summer term ending on Friday 8th June. It is therefore reasonable to assume that students were focusing on assessments, preparing to leave for the summer or had already departed.
- 2.19 There were also very few local residents in attendance. The contributors have suggested that this may be due the choice of venue with residents feeling disconnected to RHUL and that perhaps a more community focused venue such as a village hall or community centre might be more appealing to residents. One of the contributors also said that the venue itself was not easily accessible and those with mobility issues may have struggled to attend.
- 2.20 Despite these issues, the event was well received by those who attended, with attendees so keen to engage with the discussions that the event overran its allotted time. The contributors all agreed that this event should be considered for retention in 2024, albeit with a different title and possibly a shift in focus to highlight efforts undertaken within the community to tackle climate change.
- 2.21 For next year however, there may be an issue with the timing of the event. As stated above, the 2024 GBGW is set to run between 8th and 16th June. This presents a conflict with the RHUL semester schedule which is set to conclude on the 7th June. This may mean that, should Members wish to engage with the student population on the issue of climate change, that any event of this nature will have to take place outside of the GBGW.
- 2.22 The Council also approached all the primary schools in the Borough to ask them if they would be interested in hosting a climate change workshop delivered by Brickies Club and paid for by RBC. The Council received responses from two schools who were keen to host these events. These were Manorcroft Primary School and St Anns Heath Primary School. These schools each received one workshop. These were each well attended and were well received by staff and students. It is hoped that should this type of event be retained in 2024, with a full year to arrange these workshops, there may be a greater level of interest shown from other primary schools, although of course, this would be subject to the required funding being available from RBC (or part of the funding).

- 2.23 There was also a Green Skills event held at the Easter Centre at St John's Eco Church in Egham. The Council funded the venue hire and the cost of solar energy power toolkits which are reusable and were passed to the schools after the event to facilitate future learning opportunities. The Elmbridge and Runnymede Youth Hub ran this event in collaboration with Brooklands Museum and Your Energy Your Way who are an Egham based firm who design and install whole house renewable energy solutions in Hampshire, Berkshire, Surrey, West London, and the surrounding counties. It should be noted that the Youth Hub is a service delivered by Brooklands College on behalf of Elmbridge and Runnymede Borough Councils.
- 2.24 The Youth Hub delivered 4 educational workshops based on sustainability and eco-thinking to approximately 70 children from the following 4 schools in Runnymede:
- Phillip Southcote (Addlestone/SEN)
 - Jubilee High School (Chertsey/secondary)
 - Chertsey High School (Chertsey/Secondary)
 - Manorcroft Primary School (Egham/Primary)
- 2.25 The event coordinator at the Youth Hub felt that the event went very well and has stated that the children were really engaged. The Youth Hub would definitely be interested in running a similar event next year (assuming their funding is retained) and felt that they could build on the event with the hope of including more children. The event coordinator also commented that the businesses had fed back that they enjoyed attending and would be happy to be involved in a similar event next year.

Holme Farm Events

- 2.26 The Council contacted Holme Farm regarding the GBGW and encouraged them to consider running an event(s). Holme Farm responded very positively, organising the following events during the course of the week:
- 2.5 hour Forest Bathing experience with woodland tea included (event funded by RBC);
 - Holme Farm Summer Party;
 - Free guided summer walks guided by Holme Farm's ecologist.
- 2.27 The Forest Bathing event was oversubscribed. The feedback received from attendees was positive and Holme Farm would like to run similar events in the future but with an increased number of spaces. Attendance at the summer party was good, but Holme Farm felt it could have been better with an increased level of advertising in advance. They also noted that there were other local events on that day which may have had a further impact on attendance. Next year, this event is proposed to be moved to tie in with Holme Farm's Summer Solstice Weekend to avoid clashes with other local events. Attendance at the free guided walks was very good and engagement and feedback from attendees was very positive. Holme Farm would like to run more of these walks as well as Owl watching evenings. Holme Farm has said that they would like to be involved in Local Green Week celebrations next year. The general feedback is that more local advertising next year would be helpful in getting more people involved. Holme Farm is hoping to recruit a PR person to assist with this.

Nature and Sustainability Photography competition

- 2.28 The Council ran a photography competition to celebrate nature and sustainability in Runnymede. This was open to everyone, provided the images submitted were taken in Runnymede. There were three age defined categories. These were:

- Primary School – Up to age 11
- College/Secondary School – age 12 to 18
- Adult – 18 and over

2.29 The competition opened on Friday 5th May and closed on Sunday 18th June. In that time, 102 images were received across the three categories. These images were then judged by RBC officers and the Mayor of Runnymede with the winners each receiving a £50 gift voucher. The winners along with three highly commended entrants also had their work printed on canvas. Their images are now displayed in the Mayor's Parlour. The Mayor also arranged a tea party in the Parlour to meet the winners and highly commended applicants and presented them with their prizes.

Great Big Green Week 2024

2.30 As set out elsewhere in this report, in 2024, the Green Big Green Week will run from 8th to 16th June. There are various options for how the Council could get involved in next year's Great Big Green Week. These options are set out below:

Option 1: Support and promote

2.31 The Council supports and promotes the Great Big Green Week by encouraging uptake and participation by residents and local community groups. For example, local sports clubs, environmental groups, schools, local businesses, youth groups, faith groups, as well as any other organisations or individuals who may have an interest in tackling climate change. Closer to the week's start date, the Council could collate a list of local events based on details provided by the groups participating and advertise and promote them to residents. This could be done via posters/banners and sharing information and links to the Great Big Green Week's website via social media, newsletters and using the Council's website. A comprehensive comms pack is available from The Climate Coalition.

Option 2: Support, promote and co-ordinate

2.32 The Council supports the Great Big Green Week as described in Option 1 above. However, in addition, the Council effectively becomes the co-ordinator of a 'Runnymede Great Big Green Week' by registering it on the Great Big Green Week website as an overarching Borough based event. Local groups wishing to participate would then be able to tag Runnymede Great Big Green Week when they sign up their events taking place in the Borough. The events will be automatically pulled together as one big event for Runnymede on the Great Big Green Week website. If local groups sign up separately and do not tag the Council's banner, officers can still search the Great Big Green Week website via post code and contact those groups to see if they want to fall under the Runnymede Borough Great Big Green Week.

Option 3: Support, promote, co-ordinate and provide assistance

2.33 The Council support the Great Big Green Week as in Option 2 above but additionally look to provide support where practical and within our remit if approached by local groups or residents who would like to put on an event. For example, providing licences for events.

- 2.34 For the avoidance of doubt, Council support would be subject to the usual application processes. All requests would be subject to evaluation and some requests may have to be declined.

Option 4: Support, promote, co-ordinate, provide assistance and participate

- 2.35 This option would build on option 3 above, but would also see the Council running its own series of events during the course of the week with the aims of:
- Bringing together and engaging with our residents (including our young people) and businesses on the important issue of climate change;
 - Celebrating local climate change initiatives and encouraging more people and organisations to develop their own initiatives;
 - Raising the profile of the Council's response to climate change;
 - Providing useful information and signposting other relevant organisations to give people the tools they need to help the Borough transition to net zero carbon by 2050
- 2.36 Please note that the running of our own events is currently unfunded. Please see section 4 of this committee report below for further detail around resource and funding.
- 2.37 Knowing well in advance of the 2024 Great Big Green Week what the preference of the Committee is would allow officers a greater opportunity to plan events, secure the services of relevant stakeholders and explore external funding opportunities (if required).

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 Positive participation in the Great Big Green Week will support three of the Council's adopted corporate strategies:

The Climate Change Strategy:

- 3.2 Strategic Objective 3 – Positively engage with residents, businesses, community groups, national and local government and universities to share information and encourage positive behavioural change to adapt to or mitigate climate change. From Runnymede's 2030 climate vision – *'To work with our communities and businesses to create a sustainable living environment where people can meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations Brundtland Commission, 1987). To support the international climate change response to limit global warming to a 1.5 degrees centigrade temperature increase while simultaneously delivering a prosperous, caring, healthier borough where people are valued and cared for and where strong communities pull together'*.

The Empowering Communities Strategy:

- 3.3 Priority 2 - Listening to residents;
Priority 3 – Enabling communities to help themselves;
Priority 4 - Enabling communities to take control of services or plans for their areas;
Priority 5 – Advocacy: standing up and pressing Government and other organisations to meet Runnymede residents' priorities.

The Economic Development Strategy:

- 3.4 Priority 6 – Developing a low carbon economy: Encourage businesses to be more sustainable and develop the low carbon circular economy. This priority states that, *‘As far as possible, the Council will adopt and promote the principles of the Circular Economy (take, make, use, reuse, reuse) and decouple from the Linear Economy (take, make, use, throw) to minimise Carbon Emissions and waste, reduce environmental damage and increase biodiversity and health. The Council will work with Surrey, the Enterprise M3 LEP and Royal Holloway University of London to increase take up from local businesses of grants, business support and access to knowledge transfer programmes to encourage businesses to be more sustainable’.*

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy:

- 3.4 Contains a strategic objective related to healthy communities which seeks to ensure that all residents to be able to engage and participate in their community, access services, facilities, amenities, leisure, and recreational opportunities locally.

4. Resource implications/Value for Money

- 4.1 £4,580 was spent by the Council on the 2030 Runnymede Local Green Week. A core team of approximately 8 officers from the Climate Change, Planning Policy, Economic Development and Communications teams were involved in arranging the events and resourcing them.
- 4.2 The officer resource and finance implications for the 2024 GBGW will be assessed once the Committee has confirmed the level of involvement that they would like to see. As a general point, it should be noted that there is £1,650 allocated each financial year in the Climate Change budget to fund the promotion of events. This could contribute to the running of events during the 2024 GBGW if Members wish to pursue option 4. Any costs beyond this would either need to be met from savings made elsewhere, or funding would need to be secured from an external funding body.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 The legal implications associated with the 2023 Great Big Green Week project were regularly assessed as the proposals were developed.
- 5.2 The legal implications associated with the 2024 Great Big Green Week would be regularly assessed as any proposals were developed.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 The Council has a Public Sector Duty under the Equalities Act 2020 to have due regard to the need to:
- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation;
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a Protected Characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share those characteristics;

in relation to the 9 ‘Protected Characteristics’ stated within the Act.

6.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening was prepared to support GBGW 2023. This highlighted the anticipated positive impacts on protected characteristics through the provision of inclusive events which would bring together the Borough's communities. Equalities implications continued to be reassessed throughout the development of the events. It is considered noteworthy that some events and activities were arranged specifically for young people. The Green Skills event also catered for children with special educational needs.

6.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening may be required if the Committee wishes to participate in the 2024 Great Big Green Week. This will be assessed once the level of involvement sought is known.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

7.1 The implications for environmental/sustainability and biodiversity associated with participation in the Great Big Green Week are considered to be positive by getting involved in this key event which aims to celebrate local initiatives which have been developed to tackle climate change, by raising awareness of this important issue and encouraging others to get involved.

8. Other implications

8.1 Subject to the direction of the Committee in terms of the level of participation sought during the 2024 Great Big Green Week, there may be further implications which Officers need to consider and report back on.

9. Timetable for Implementation

9.1 An indicative timetable for the 2024 Great Big Green Week will be set once the level of participation sought by the Committee is known.

10. Background papers

None

11. Appendices

None