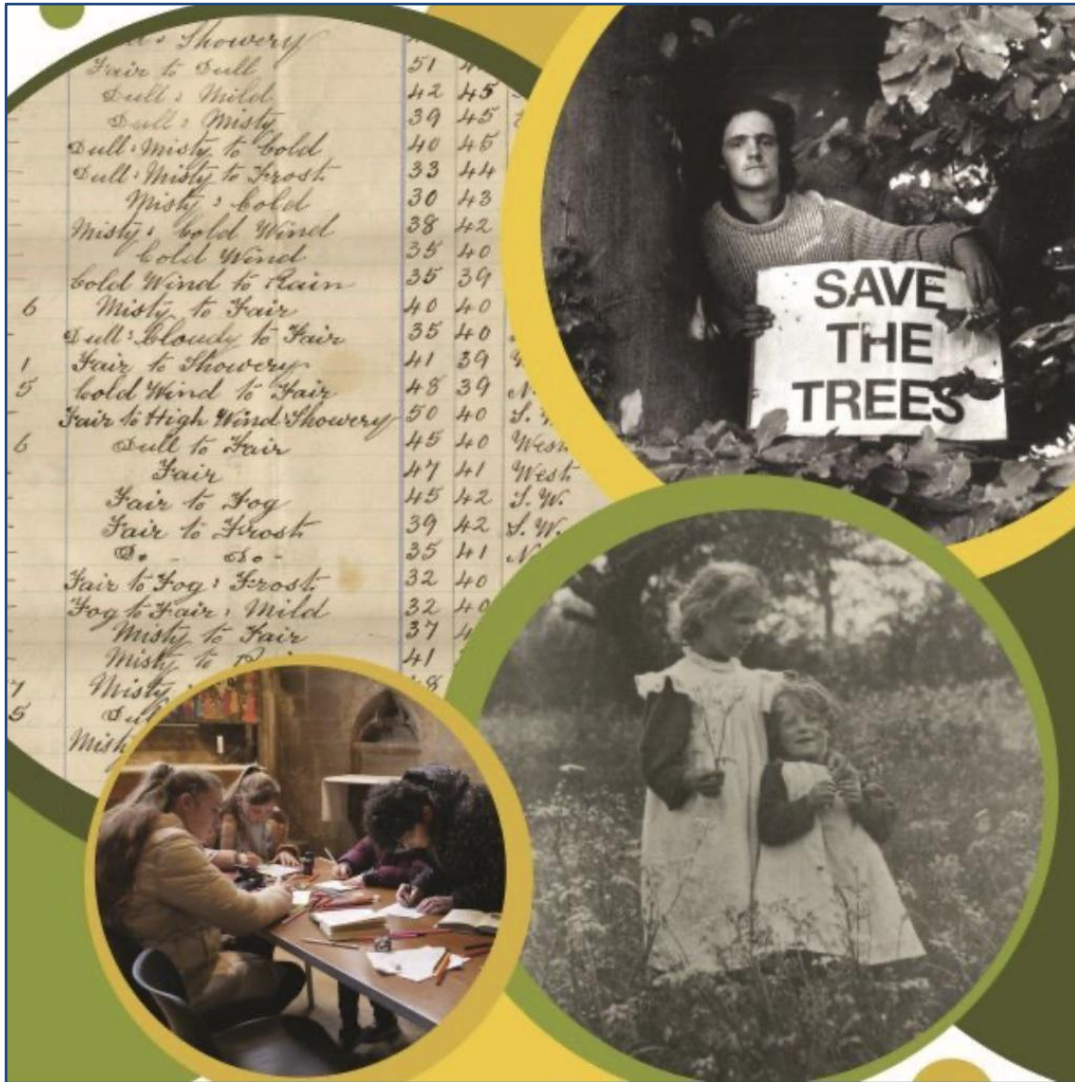


Evaluation of the Green Pledge Project



Final Report for Gloucestershire Archives

28 November 2025

Katie Norgrove, Cultural Consulting Network

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1.0 Introduction

This evaluation report covers the period from the beginning of the *Green Pledge* project in October 2023 to its conclusion in November 2025. It aims to set out how well the project delivered against the approved purposes of the grant of £246,800 awarded from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (Heritage Fund) in July 2023, under its Dynamic Collections programme and to assess the extent to which it met its intended outcomes.

1.1 What did the Green Pledge set out to achieve?

The *Green Pledge* Project is the brainchild of Gloucestershire Archives (GA) whose mission is to gather, keep, and share local authority and community archives of Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. Gloucestershire Archives is located at the Gloucestershire Heritage Hub along with partner organisations.

The *Green Pledge* project set out to take a holistic approach to “greening” the service aiming to reduce environmental footprint, catalogue relevant environmental archives, train staff and a new apprentice, co-create activities, events and exhibitions in collaboration with audiences and partners and to run a public pledge campaign with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

Green Pledge sought to make good on the principles of the Dynamic Collections programme:

- Collections to be used by and meaningful to a wide range of people;
- Different perspectives are heard and a variety of stories told; and
- Collections are actively managed and reviewed.

1.2 What were the approved purposes of the Heritage Fund grant?

The *Green Pledge* project set out to achieve its outcomes through a series of outputs and activities formally known as the approved purposes. These are:

Infrastructure and collections management:

Putting GA's own house in order by:

- Installation of solar panels to reduce carbon footprint/create shade to reduce heating up the strongrooms;
- Grey water management;
- Waste management improvement;
- Digitising a large sample of the tithe map accompanying awards from Stroud and Forest of Dean districts and items identified by apprentices, students and volunteers;
- Cataloguing the environmental records collection; and
- Working with GCC's Youth Climate Group, Libraries Young People's Panel and students to identify collecting priorities and influence events.

Engagement

- Public Green Pledge campaign in partnership with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust;
- Children's events with carbon footprint training for parents;
- Work and research experience for students;
- Joint project with Roots café and local families to grow food in the community garden (this was subsequently changed to working with Project Grow and Wiggly);
- Tithe project for Stroud/Forest of Dean districts residents with co-created events;
- Remote volunteering opportunities for those unable to reach the archives and supported roles for mental health referrals, back to work or on prescription volunteers;
- Work with residents, planners, and academics working on flooding issues;
- Creation of green history inspired eco bunting (recycled cloth) with multi-ethnic sewing group; and
- Improving the community garden as a space for wildlife with activities.

Employment and skills

- New Green Pledge project roles including: a 0.4 FTE Project Manager (Christina Wheeler); a 0.6 FTE Project Archivist (Jenny Rutland); an FTE apprentice over 18 months (Ethan Langfield); a 0.4 Project Officer (Hannah Basnett);

- Freelance learning and outreach officer (Marion Hill) and freelance evaluator;
- 20+ onsite volunteer roles to support map sorting, cataloguing and exhibition development and remote volunteer role based on the Know Your Place green layer

Re-interpretation

- Commissioning of 10+ oral histories suggested by the public;
- Follow up of new collections suggested by the public to enable additional environmental archives to be deposited;
- Develop crowd sourced online exhibition – Green Gloucestershire with schools, history and community groups to be promoted through banners hosted at Gloucester History Festival and across library network (this was subsequently changes to travelling exhibition);
- Community grants to underrepresented communities to enable different perspectives or stories to be heard (this was subsequently changes to artist commissions)

1.3 Outcomes for the Project

The project established an agreed set of planned outcomes as part of the initial evaluation planning phase after the Heritage Fund award in the Autumn of 2023, that drew from the framing of the Heritage Fund application. As can be seen below, the team identified which of the Heritage Fund outcomes from Strategic Framework 5 the project sought to achieve and mapped against these its own more specific supporting outcomes.

Heritage Fund Outcomes	Green Pledge Supporting Outcome	
1. A wider range of people will have engaged with heritage	1.a	A wider range of people interested in climate issues engaging with GA than before the project by applying the Dynamic Collections Methodology and by signing up to Green Pledge.
	1.b	Specific project strands related events, outreach, on site, off site and online engagement will connect new audiences to archives

2. Heritage will be better interpreted and explained	2.a	Through the involvement of young people and environmental groups key Gloucestershire environmental stories that need to be captured and told will be identified.
	2.b	Access to and understanding of GA environmental collections will be unlocked
	2.c	Community collections at risk will be better cared for through volunteer training.
3. People will have developed skills	3.a	Volunteers: (existing and new) will have developed skills and confidence, includes young people and students.
	3.b	Volunteer engagement increases with increase in new volunteers as a result of focus on climate issues
	3.c	Project staff including freelancers and apprentice gain new workplace skills associated with best archival practice and specific skills in responding to climate issues
4. Our organisation will be more resilient	4.a	By embedding green thinking GA will have a more sustainable operational model to make GA more resilient
	4.b	Green Pledge partner organisations wish to maintain a longer-term role in supporting our goals.

1.4 Evaluation Approach

The overall aim of the evaluation was to prove the extent to which *Green Pledge* has achieved the outcomes set out at 1.3 above. The evaluation has striven to implement the following 6 principles identified by Heritage Fund in planning and execution:

- Telling the story: It is important to be clear about the link between activities and actions and the change that they are designed to bring about through using a logical framework;
- Counting, involving and using indicators that matter: appropriate and methodical ways of asking were used which provide robust evidence.

- Beyond counting: The data was subject to analysis to provide evidence on outcomes.
- Avoiding bias: The evaluation is objective and free from bias.
- Structuring the process of understanding: The results are clearly and sufficiently presented
- Improve and not just prove: The conclusion and recommendations are sufficiently clear to enable stakeholders to identify and apply lessons learnt.

With the Project Team, an evaluation framework was developed and agreed which was an adapted form of the logic model approach advocated by Heritage Fund in its *Good Practice Guidance for Evaluating Projects (2018)*.

The framework identified activities, outputs and measures of success for the achievement of the outcomes, as well as the evaluation method, tools to be deployed, their frequency of use and responsibility for the data (which was shared across members of the Project Team). Evaluation tools used ranged from those which GA already regularly uses some adapted existing tools (recording of volunteer time, volunteer impact survey, events forms), and some new tools designed by the Project Team based on their experience (recording participation). At the final report stage these tools will be triangulated with independent case studies, independent qualitative interviews with selected groups and stakeholders and an independently designed and managed workshop with staff and key partners.

The evaluation consultant also had access to all formal reports prepared for the Heritage Fund monitoring purposes. The evaluation consultant met regularly with the Project Team and worked closely with the Project Officer on implementation of tools, data gathering and the evidence base.

2.0 Key Challenges and how they were overcome

The *Green Pledge* project has been really well managed and delivered and certainly has benefitted from a relatively clear and well-developed project plan. That said some inevitably challenges have arisen. These can be summarised as:

- Recruitment of project team with right blend of skills and experience deliver a high-quality activity programme and blending these with the GA permanent core staff team;
- A period of serious illness of the Project Manager in middle of the project programme;
- Project raising expectations from audiences and community groups that GA will be able to sustain once the project completes
- Loss/shift in partner e.g. Roots Café closed for a period at the point the project started.
- Sufficient capacity to deliver an ambitious programme – which necessitated an increase of 80 hours of time for the Learning and Outreach Freelancer
- Successfully integrating GA and partner environmental records into the content of activity and events programme so that the latter were constantly “fed” by the archives themselves.
- Trialling new ground in terms of environmentally sustainable practice for an archive service particularly the implementation of passive approach and domestic-scale solutions (such as wine-cellar technology to retain low temperatures for the specialist photographic store).

Of note, is that, of the formal risks identified in the risk register, the only one to occur was that of the loss of a key member of staff for several months.

The key challenges within *Green Pledge* were handled well. Evaluation from a reflection session with staff and partners at the end of the project attributed the success in overcoming challenges to the following factors:

People

- **Skilled and motivated team** with the right combination of external new expertise brought to bear.
- **Effective and empathetic leadership** able to motivate a team with diverse skills and experience from inside and outside of the traditional archives sector
- **Passion and commitment** from Project Officer, Project Manager, Head of Service and permanent archive staff that helped overcome inevitable obstacles and come up with workarounds to problems (e.g. when the Project Manager was ill)

- **An adaptable and flexible approach** from the team that generated solutions to unexpected challenges.
- **Mutual respect** all team members articulated how much they valued the knowledge and skills of others and enjoyed learning from each other to find solutions.

Communication and Planning

- **Clarity on roles and responsibilities** – all those involved in the *Green Pledge* project were clear about how they were expected to contribute to the aims of the project and how they related to other members of the team.
- **Open and transparent decision making** within the team structure that allowed necessary pivots to be supported by all – this included delaying the delivery of initial activities for a while to carry out further consultation with target audiences to make the programme more responsive and meaningful.
- **A strong project plan, structure and updated risk register** provided a solid and continuous planning process that built on GA's considerable major project management experience.

Resourcing

- The project costs were well developed and realistic with a sensible contingency.
- Project staff workloads were demanding but achievable.
- Volunteering support was balanced across a range of project tasks and student placements were sufficiently considered to be valuable to the research and delivery of activity strands.
- Team members felt well supported by the Head of Service and there was proper stakeholder buy-in from partners (e.g. from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust)

3.0 Were the Project Outcomes Achieved?

The evaluation against the original measures of success for the 4 outcomes shows that only one of them was not met within the project timetable (this was related to conversion of participants in activities to actual archive users) and all the others were met. Indeed, many of the outcomes related to wider range of people engaged heritage, in particular, were comfortably exceeded.

	Exceeded	Met	Not Met
Measures of success (total 20)	9	10	1

It is worth underlining here is that the measures of success were not manipulated during the project, i.e. rendered easier to achieve where the interim evaluation evidenced that they may not be met.

Before introducing narrative evaluation of the project against its outcomes, below is presented an infographic produced by the GA team that summarises the outputs produced by *Green Pledge*.

The Green Pledge Project @ Gloucestershire Archives

7,435

people joined our events and talks



138,660

kilowatt-hours of solar power generated



3,661

volunteer hours, including student projects,
new catalogues, research, help at events



175

new environmental archive
collections and publications received



61,614

people saw the travelling exhibition



12,591

environmental maps, plans
and records catalogued



736

public pledges to help
nature and the planet



2 new
water
butts



5 new trees
planted in
the carpark

4

electric vehicle
charging points
installed



2 cycle
Septembers



1 hot
compost



8 waste
audits



63 kilograms of
vegetables harvested
for Wiggly Charity



Visit our website to access

16 online
podcasts



9 research
guides



1 interactive
exhibition



1 final
report



www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/our-projects/the-green-pledge-project

3.1 Wider range of people will be engaged with heritage

<i>Green Pledge</i>	Measures of success	Met?
Outcome		
A wider range of people interested in climate issues engaging with GA than before the project by applying the Dynamic Collections Methodology and by signing up to Green Pledge	Participation summary figures of	
	5200 people attend events, talks, workshops and outreach;	Exceeded
	51000 people reach via articles, web & social media	Exceeded
	30 young people influencing the project	Exceeded
	Qualitative measures focused on behaviour change:	
	a) 50% of all participants are more aware of Gloucestershire environmental heritage and the behaviours needed to tackle the climate crisis	Exceeded
	b) 30% of all participants understand better the changes which society, groups and individuals need to make to tackle the climate crisis	Exceeded
	c) 20% of all participants have or will change how they act	Exceeded
	d) 100 sign-ups to Green Pledge and recording of wide range of personal commitments. Increased carbon awareness.	Exceeded
Specific project strands related events, outreach, on site, off site and online engagement will connect new audiences to archives.	25% of participants in events, outreach, new Green Pledge offer, and online offer will not have come into contact with archives before.	Exceeded
	5% of participants will sign up for readers card at Gloucestershire Archives	Not met

Green Pledge carried out a vast array of events and activities under the strapline of **Heritage that illuminates the future**. Activities were designed to connect audiences beyond those already users of archives to climate change and biodiversity loss – by offering glimpses of our environmental past which raise awareness, encourage further exploration and local action.

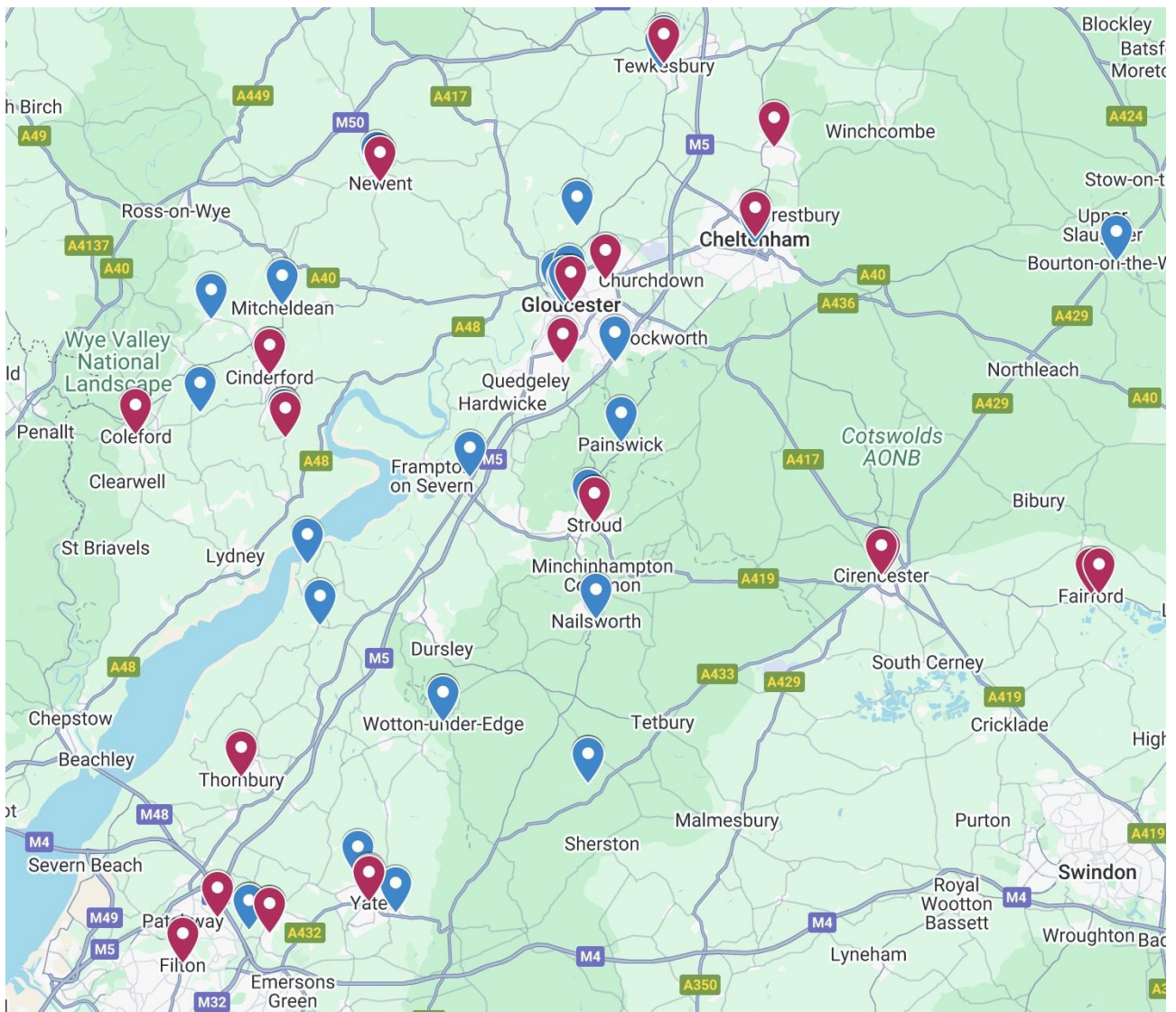
The photo montage below showcases moments from a sample of various activities and community engagement efforts completed during the project. Each image corresponds to a titled event or activity:



1. **Apple crown at wassail**
2. **Green pledge wormery**
3. **Little girl with hoops community garden**
4. **Stroud museum in the park**
5. **Summer activities vegetable detectives**
6. **Tewkesbury Abbey Greener Together**
7. **Travelling Exhibition at Filton Library**
8. **Landscape in a Box**
9. **Youth Climate Group visit**

By the end of the project, total attendees at events, talks workshops and the outreach programme reached **7453** of which **3791** were under 18 (mainly reached through the Cheltenham Science Festival). This exceeded the target of 5200.

A key aim was for outreach to touch all parts of the County (including South Gloucestershire). This is demonstrated by the following map of where events took place:



Case Study of Wider Range: Project Grow – Community Garden



An outstanding success in reaching a wider range of people has been taking place in GA's community garden space - first created back in 2019. Through *Green Pledge*, the team welcomed two charities [Project Grow](#) and the feeding charity [Wiggly](#). Project Grow has transformed the space into a productive market garden whilst Wiggly use the produce in their education programme that focuses on nutrition, food and cooking skills for life. Volunteering in the garden is proving life-changing for some volunteers including one person who now feels able to leave his house and is seeking employment. The project has now been extended to the Bishop of Gloucester's garden and Kingsholm Primary School. Lead by Project Grow, the *Green Pledge* team and other partners created a wonderful "Food for Thought" installation at Cheltenham Science Festival in June 2025. In the first two days alone over 1600 school children took part in activities about sustainable growing with many inspired to make environmental pledges.

Groups as diverse as Gloucester Deaf Association Lunch Club. Gloucestershire County Council's NETT cookery course, Family Space Holiday and Activities Food Programme and the Fresh Hope School House Community Café have been taking part in sustainable food production as part of Wiggly's work with the team. Over 3,000 participants produced 6325 meals between December 2023 and September 2025.

In terms of online and in print articles including Cotswold Life and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust magazine readership reached an estimated of total is 321,669 well exceeding the measure of success of 51,000

The reach of the *Green Pledge* page of a snapshot of GA website at the end of the project showed 1020 active users generated. GA's social media reach in April 2025 was:

2,787 Facebook followers

1,419 Twitter followers

3.2K clicks spanning 35 different countries

1,701 messages

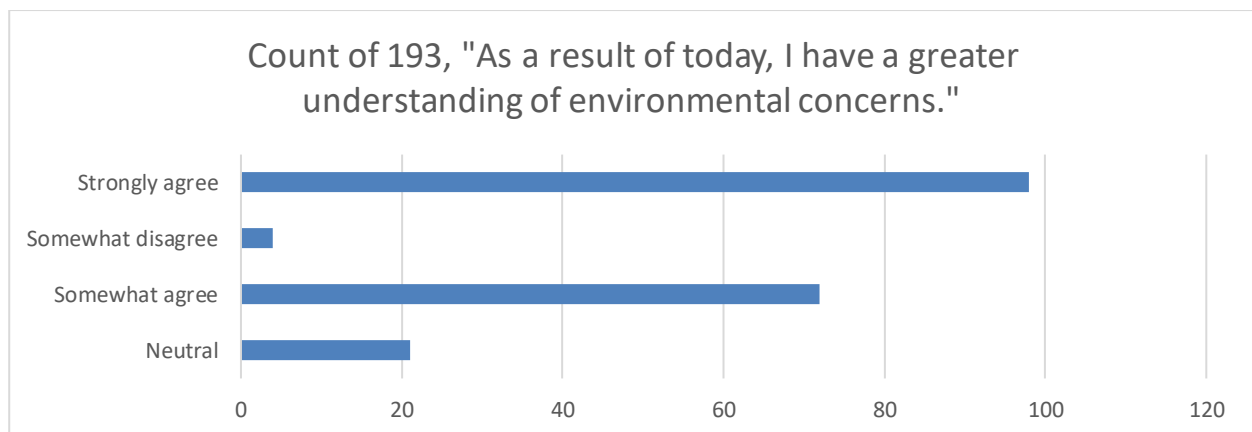
1,200 posts published with twitter engagement at 3.03% and Facebook at 1.52%

853.81 average reach

More than 80 individuals mainly young people contributed to the Heritage Illuminates the Future consultation process influencing the interpretation content and archival collections selection.

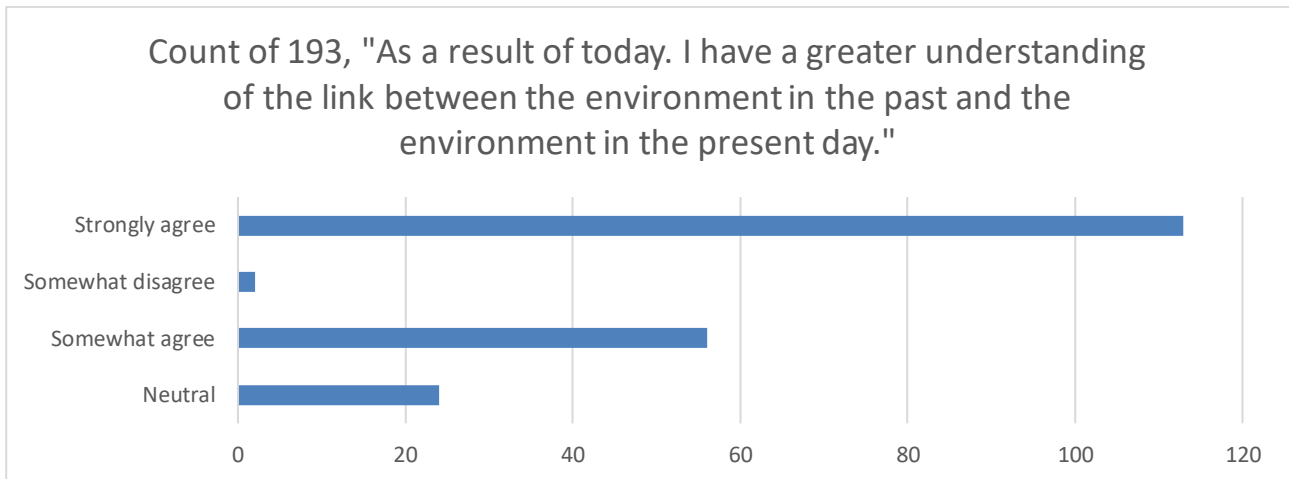
Event feedback forms collated can evidence the extent to which the project is **exceeded is measures of success that encourage behaviour change.**

The chart below shows that **88%** of participants that responded are gaining a greater understanding of environmental concerns – well over target levels.

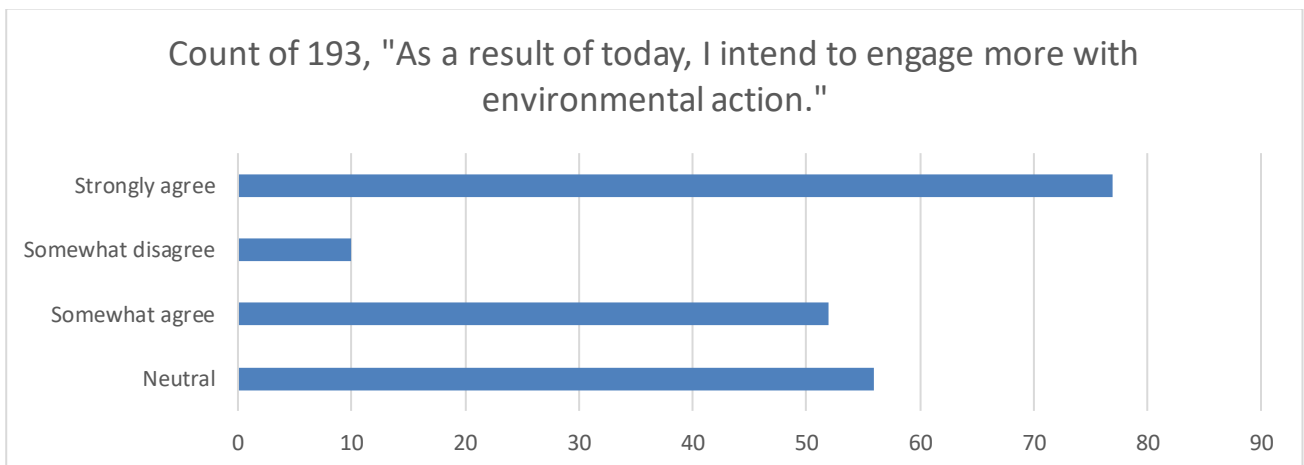


Key to the project's success is whether it succeeds in evidencing the value that archival records can bring to an appreciation of current climate issues. The chart below demonstrates states that

the same percentage **88%** of participants that responded have a greater understanding of the link between the environment in the past and the present day.

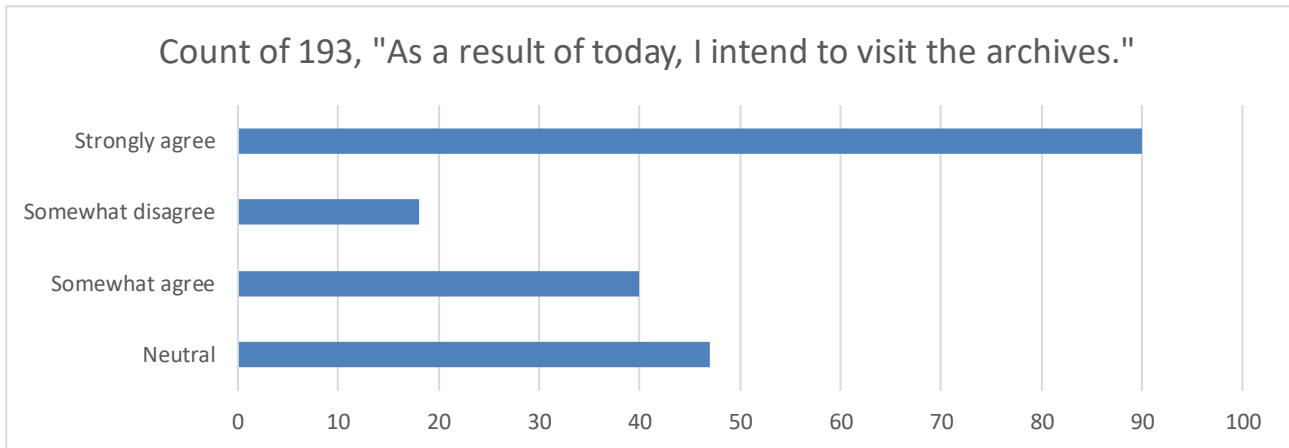


The measures of success for the project to act as means of changing how people 20% of participants will act has already been well exceeded in the groups of respondents. The chart below reveals that **67%** of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that they intended to engage more with environmental action.



Of importance to GA is also whether the climate change related project activities were likely to result in interest in direct visit to the archive service to as awareness of the richness and relevance of its environmental collections grows. The chart below tends to indicate that this is the case for

the **67%** of the survey respondents:



Similarly, respondents were asked to score the statement "I feel inspired to find out more" where a score of 1 indicates maximum intent and 5 the least. The results show that **58% responded with a score of 1 showing a high level of intent to find out more.**

There is some evidence that this intent translated into sign-ups for reader cards at GA. **By project completion, 40 such sign-ups had been achieved mainly from University of Gloucestershire students, Climate Youth Group members and those attending the Water and Flooding Workshop Day** which may augur well for attracting a wider range of future archive researchers. This corresponds to **1%** of adults attending events which is below the **5% target**. In reality, this measure of success cannot be properly judged until GA carries out its next visitor survey.

Using a similar scored statement from 1-5 (where 1 represents the highest score) of 193 respondents:

- **80% gave a score of 1 for their enjoyment of the experience**
- **79% gave a score of one to show they had learnt something new**
- **71% gave a score of one to state they had a positive experience engaging with staff/and or volunteers and**
- **62% gave a score of 1 to show they would like to take part in other *Green Pledge events***

An analysis of responses to the question *"What was your favourite thing about the event?"* illustrates what was engaging and memorable for participants:

"I really loved finding out about the riot in Wotton over food. I went home and told my husband and daughter about it. I can picture how the past may well repeat itself in the future, without positive change!"

"It is hard to think of one part, but I really enjoyed how the staff engaged with the children."

"Community memory – choosing to remember or forget; importance of keeping memory alive."

"Seeing the old maps and documents in person and how they show climate issues such as deforestation."

"I found Marion Hill's delivery of what might have been a dull subject, really engaging and entertaining."

The measure of success of 100 sign-ups to Green Pledge and recording of wide range of personal commitment including increased carbon awareness has been far exceeded with 736 pledges of individuals and groups by end of October 2025. The image to the right shows a Pledge that was attached to a tree in the community garden by a young visitor.



Below is a structured analysis of the content of the Green Pledge that looks at **themes, participant types, and scope of action**:

Key Themes in Pledges

Theme	Sub-themes and illustrative quotes
Sustainable Living and Consumption	<p>Reduce meat consumption: <i>"Eat less meat," "Eat less beef," "Eat and buy local produce."</i></p> <p>Avoid single-use plastics: <i>"Use less plastic," "Buy in glass containers," "Use reusable coffee cups."</i></p> <p>Waste reduction and reuse: <i>"Reuse jars and bags," "Mend and repair clothes," "Use Too Good To Go app," "Upcycle items."</i></p> <p>Buy second-hand: <i>"Charity shop clothes," "Facebook Marketplace," "Vinted."</i></p>
Environmental Stewardship	<p>Gardening and biodiversity: <i>"Grow own vegetables," "Rewild garden," "Build bug hotels," "Plant indigenous plants."</i></p> <p>Support wildlife: <i>"Make hedgehog homes," "Avoid pesticides," "Leave lawn unmowed."</i></p> <p>Water conservation: <i>"Harvest rainwater," "Turn off water," "Use water run-off."</i></p>
Energy Use and Climate Change	<p>Renewable energy: <i>"Solar panels," "Switch to renewable energy provider."</i></p> <p>Energy conservation: <i>"Turn off lights," "Use less electricity," "Timers for devices."</i></p>

	Reduce travel footprint: <i>“Walk or cycle more,” “Lift share,” “Use public transport,” “Avoid flights.”</i>
Community and Education	<p>Community projects: <i>“Organize litter pick,” “Community Garden,” “Monthly protest of hope.”</i></p> <p>Education and advocacy: <i>“Talk to friends and family,” “Encourage others,” “Social media awareness,” “Hold MPs accountable.”</i></p> <p>Youth involvement: Numerous pledges from children and teens, showing early environmental awareness.</p>
Organisational Changes	<p>Green business practices: <i>“Environmental sustainability in business plan,” “Green PTA fundraising,” “Procurement from local businesses.”</i></p> <p>Policy and leadership: <i>“Application forms with environmental questions,” “Environmental action plan for Voices,” “Improved training for community leads.”</i></p>

Types of Participants that made pledges

There is encouraging evidence from the pledges made that a wide range of people have committed to changing their actions.

- **Individuals:** were the vast majority—diverse in age, including children as young as 12 and adults up to their 50s and older.
- **Families:** Numerous pledges reflect decisions affecting family groups (e.g., meal planning, home composting).
- **Organisations and Community Groups:** including to date “Voices,” PTA, local businesses, churches, and schools often citing structural or policy-oriented commitments.

- **Youth Groups:** including the Youth Climate Group, Yate Heritage Centre, and school students engaged actively, often pledging zero waste goals and nature protection.

Scope of actions

These were interesting to analyse in terms of potential impact as although the majority related to personal behaviour change (diet, transport, home energy use etc) there were also groupings of actions related to:

- **Household/Systemic Changes:** Compost bins, rainwater harvesting, solar panels
- **Community Engagement:** Litter picking, educational efforts, supporting local initiatives.
- **Policy and Institutional Influence:** Pledges that aim to influence business or government decisions, though fewer in number.

Further observations and insights

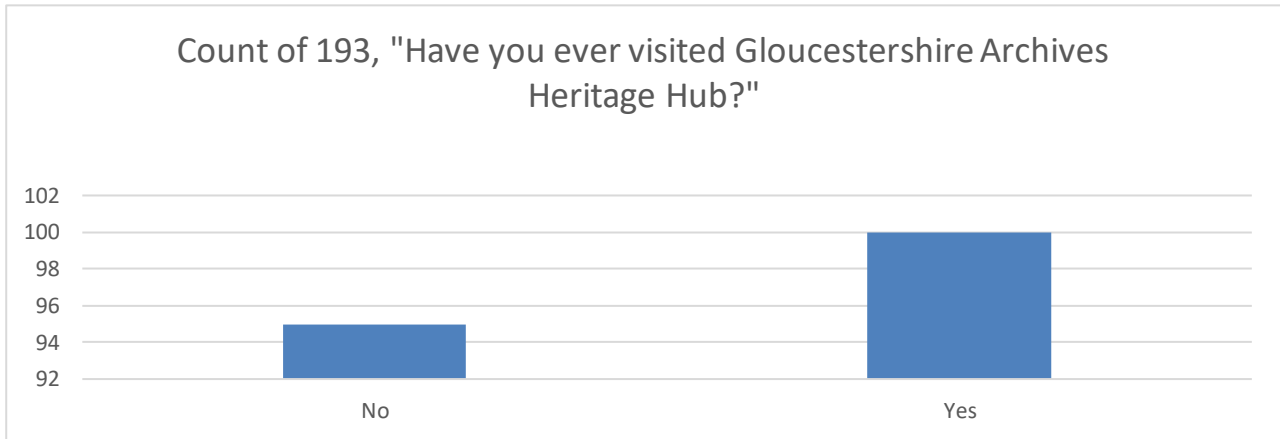
Noticeable from reading the pledges were some other indicators of the kind of commitments made which bodes well for impact of future action:

- **There was a high engagement with nature:** Gardening, wildlife support, and rewilding were all cited regularly.
- **A strong interest in reducing plastic and waste:** Many specific actions were about packaging and reuse.
- **A willingness to advocate:** People pledged not only personal change but also communication and advocacy, suggesting some ripple effect potential.
- **A sense of humour and creativity:** Some pledges are whimsical or poetic, enhancing emotional connection.

Wider range of people engaged with Green Pledge

Is there evidence that *Green Pledge* attracted a wider range of people to engage with heritage? Evidence from the events survey suggests this is the case. The chart below shows in summary that broadly **49% of respondents at events had not visited Gloucestershire Archives Heritage Hub –**

well exceeding the target of 25% - with the caveat that it is possible that some of those stated they had not visited may have had other contact with archives.



Demographic data from survey respondents shows that the profile of participants at events and activities is wider than the user base of GA in the following ways:

- Age range is younger with 23% of people aged 29-59, 3% aged 19-25, 4% aged 17-18 and 3% aged under 16.
- Ethnically more diverse with 2% of people identifying as of Asian or Asian British or Black.
- More likely to consider themselves as having a non-limiting (13%) or limiting disability (8%).

3.2 Heritage will be in better interpreted and explained

<i>Green Pledge Outcome</i>	<i>Measures of success</i>	<i>Met?</i>
Through the involvement of young people and environmental groups key Gloucestershire environmental stories that need to be captured and told will be identified.	16 collections newly identified by young people and environmental groups will be accessioned and catalogued.	Met
	12 additional oral histories or podcasts recorded and made accessible that fill gaps in the environmental records of GA	Met
	New collections and oral histories bring new perspectives to GA collections	Met
Access to and understanding of GA environmental collections will be unlocked	13.2 cubic metres of inaccessible records accessions and/or catalogued	Exceeded
	Newly catalogued material, digitised material on Know Your Place, and other resources (e.g. those created for inclusion in exhibition) engaged with by new audiences as demonstrated by effective use of GA resources	Met

In the early stages of the project, the Project Team undertook a consultation exercise to help shape the emphasis in themes and topics to be addressed and explored in activities and events programme so that it would appeal to a wide range of people. This was framed as “heritage that illuminates the future”. 84 formal responses were received from individuals and organisations including the University of Gloucestershire’s Youth Climate Group, Stroud Green Drinks, Extinction Rebellion and Forest of Dean Climate Action Group.

Respondents were asked to select the most important environmental topics to them for further exploration. Results were:

Issue	Weighted Score
food production	140
water	136
flooding	135
pollution	134
species extinction	111
changing land use	103
energy	95
scrapes	86
food insecurity	72
activism	65

[illegible]

The project has significantly opened up the process of telling the stories of Gloucestershire's environmental history through the involvement of young people and environment. An essential foundation for interpretation is the archival sources themselves and hence the desire to collect material that offers new perspectives on environmental themes that "illuminate the future".

16 new collections were accessioned that were identified, accumulated or previously managed by young people and environmental groups and 13 oral histories had been recorded and made accessible through a series of 16 podcasts created with young people, environmental campaigners and naturalists.

17 cubic metres (111 archive box spaces) of new collections have been accessioned of which 14.5 boxes are collections identified with young people and environmental groups, the vast majority of these have already been catalogued and added to GA's online searchable catalogue so they are available to the public. Accessions have included nearly 100GB of digital recordings. Wider work has included cataloguing 12,591 environmental maps, plans and records and rationalising GA's map storage.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT)

The largest collection accessioned and catalogued is that of the GWT and here is the story of its inclusion in the *Green Pledge* Project:

Sat in dusty boxes in a loft space at Robinswood Hill, for years the secrets of GWT's early years were kept hidden from interested eyes. All that changed when volunteer Sara Kinsey heard tell of an interesting collection of yet uncatalogued documents waiting to be uncovered.

"I've been a GWT member for a long time" Sara said, reflecting on what got her involved with the GWT archive. "I wanted to get more involved so started volunteering doing field condition surveys and habitat monitoring. A couple of years ago I was doing some training on Poors Allotment in the Forest of Dean, chatting away with the trainer from GWT. She asked me what I did for a living and when I mentioned my day job as an Archivist there was a slight pause before she said, 'we've got lots of archives, would you like to take a look?'"

What followed was what Sara has described as an Archivist's dream, a day spent crawling around in an attic space, making a list of what was there and thinking about what she could do with it all. She worked through the boxes to create the first comprehensive list of their contents and produced a report for GWT that flagged Gloucestershire Heritage Hub as a potential partner in unravelling the secrets of the archive further.

n total 25 boxes made their way out of storage at Robinswood Hill and down to the Gloucestershire Heritage Hub, becoming part of their Green Pledge Project. The project is taking a fresh look at the huge volume of environmental records held by the Heritage Hub, considering how the past can help us better care for the natural world now and in the future. Sara said, *"I saw the advert for the project and just thought what amazing timing and what a great opportunity, to have a team of Archivists get to grips with GWT's archive as part of a wider look into environmental records in the county."*

Heather Forbes, Head of Archives at Gloucestershire Heritage Hub, said, *"We were really keen to get this project going as there's been a lot of environmental change in Gloucestershire. We're a county of conservationists, and these records really offer a snapshot in time in terms of the species that have been recorded across the county over the last 100 years. That gives us an amazing record that we can compare with what conservationists are seeing now."* There are more environmental records coming in from other organisations too, including WWT. The Heritage Hub is already home to collections from organisations such as the Environment Agency, Severn Trent and several Local Authorities in the county. Each record helps to build a picture of the environmental and conservation history of Gloucestershire.



So, what have Sara, Heather and the team uncovered so far? There's a whole array of documents that tell the story of GWT's foundation and early years, including painstakingly recorded meeting minutes and almost every newsletter the Trust has ever published. There's an amazing record of activities carried out by GWT across the county and an incredible series of notebooks put together by one member in the 1970s.

Every time they went out for a walk, they carefully recorded what they saw in a field notebook. Every species is detailed, with drawings and even pressings of some of the plant species they encountered. Across 14 volumes this member has curated an amazing snapshot of the flora and fauna of the time. The level of detail they've captured means we could recreate those walks today, to track how things have changed.

As well as the GWT records, new collections have included those from the Gloucester Youth Climate Group, Cheltenham Youth Climate Group, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, the John Moore Society, Friends of Robinswood Hill, "Hands off our Forest" against the government's proposed sale of the Forest of Dean, Stroud Valleys Project, Forest of Dean Green Party, Dawn Chorus Readings, Gloucestershire Beekeepers Association and the Good Gardeners Association.

The 16 podcasts have been recorded of which the first 13 are published [here](#). These are a rich documentary source for the significant role Gloucestershire people and organisations have played in environmental matters include activists and changemakers, farmers, ecologists, conservationists, and other people who are working to respect and protect nature and the environment

It is clear that these collections and oral histories are offering a **much wider range of perspectives on the role of the past in shining light on environmental concerns of today and in documenting attitudes towards the climate crisis that this point in time. The voices of young activists, campaigners and groups that seek to protect our natural world over time are now more explicitly part of GA's permanent collection.**

Much of the focus is about how the past can help us better care for the natural world now and in the future, and the relationship to present day action.

Podcast: Gloucestershire Youth Climate Group – What Can I Do?

The Gloucester Youth Climate Group held a festival in the centre of Gloucester called What Can I Do? (WCID). The festival included all sort of workshops, creative activities, spoken word performance, music, food and debates. The aim was to celebrate and build on community around youth climate action in Gloucestershire.

Green Pledge wanted to know and record young people's feelings about the climate and ecological crisis, what they themselves do to address it, what they see as barriers to young people taking part, and what the

young participants wanted to say about the crisis to people in power now, and to people 50 years in the future. The views of 12 young people were recorded. The image below shows Theo Adams and Jussara Nazare at the Festival:



There're some people out there who were literally giving their entire livelihoods to make stuff happen. There is people who are creating organisations, mobilising communities and actually genuinely bringing about positive community change. It's if yeah, we able to bring people with the science and the knowledge and the heart to the front of how we lead our world, I think we'll be able to make some positive change. Jussara who is involved in upcycling fashion and clothes swaps.

A wide variety of different forms of interpretation and new content have helped new audiences to engage with archives including co-created artist commissions, oral and digital histories, travelling exhibitions, family friendly events, talks, presentations, social media posts, blogs, and new guides to environmental records.

The travelling exhibition was developed thematically in light of the consultation exercise mentioned above. This drove the relative importance given to various themes of environmental history and present-day issues. The final content of the exhibition portable banners is below:



The travelling exhibition was installed in community venues including at the Heritage Hub itself, Stroud Museum in the Park, John Moore Museum Tewkesbury, Nature in Art, Thornbury Library, Bradley Stoke Library, Filton Library, Long Levens Library, Newent Library Winterbourne Library, Yate Library and Tuffley

Not all venues counted numbers of people engaged but of those that did so there were **61,614** attendances.

The evaluation had originally planned to capture views of those engaged with the travelling exhibition by using the events feedback forms, but venue staff indicated that they did not have the capacity to administer this and hence a simple set observation questions was developed that were reliant on observations from library staff. Common themes in the comments received were:

- The banners provoked discussion and encouraged conversations amongst library users;
- User took photos of the banner content to share and remember;
- Time taken to engage with the banners was varied from glancing to detail study;
- Level of the issues debated in the banners was usually low, content was appreciated and illuminating, as was the challenge to behaviour; and
- Where artwork (see below) accompanied the banners, this really improved engagement and enjoyment.

To bring to life the environmental interpretative themes, 6 mini artist commissions were grant funded, some of which had a brief to co-create a creative piece with children, young people and/or a school. These commissions, which were very well received, included:

- Creation of a shed with artwork that responded to archive sources related to local food growing, biodiversity loss, climate change and campaigning, developed with local children. The shed blended displays of images of documents with creative responses and boards placed around the garden. A second-hand shed was used along with recycled / recyclable materials wherever possible. The shed formed a core part of the Project Grow temporary exhibition at Cheltenham Science Festival and has been donated to Kingsholm Primary

School. Artist Chris James

- A multi-media textile sculpture using recycled plastic and fabric in response to the flood of Arlingham Church in 1607 which was toured with the travelling exhibition to some venues.
Artist Imogen Williams
- An artwork installation displaying forest related archives and documents as means to collecting forest memories. This was presented at the Cinderford Festival in May, as well as J2, other forest libraries and other local events. Children at Mitcheldean Youth Club and Ruardean Youth Club help to develop the installation writing down experiences of the forest, and about living in the Forest of Dean, and decorating animals of the forest, including using words from a poem by Leonard Clark, "Woods". Leonard Clark grew up in Cinderford and wrote beautiful poems about the forest. The commission created a grandfather clock including stories related to the forest, new poetry a giant fish for Ebb and Flow's art space connected to the Save the Wye campaign. Artist John Slater
- A 3d creative piece called "mementos" was made of unfired earthenware to symbolise the loss of farmland, woodlands, hedgerows and orchards that the archives bear witness to and evidence. Mementos toured with the travelling exhibition venues in South Gloucestershire. These were placed on the floor of venues to communicate the concept of treading lightly. Artist Nicola Wilson
- Sculpting of a piece of 100-year-old ash tree into a moveable wooden sculpture the "Pledgehog" so that audiences can post their pledges into the hog. Pledgehog has been at Nature and Art, Stroud Museum in the Park and at other outreach external venues. The artist state she *"took inspiration from beautiful Egyptian bronze hedgehog sculptures, symbols of protection and worn as amulets to ward off evil. Documents at Gloucestershire Archives chart how the hedgehog has gone from being persecuted as vermin, to being seen as an important part of the ecosystem, to endangered and protected species...I wanted the carving to be robust and tactile so the public can touch the rounded spikes and get a feel of*

its sculptural shape.” Artist Natasha Housego

- Creation of cyanotype bunting from expression of the word ‘eco’ meaning home with 10 marginalised groups including Gloucestershire Neurodivergent Arts Collective, Star College Students (serving those with brain injuries) and a Cheltenham Syrian Women’s Refugee Group. The bunting was exhibited at Cheltenham Science Festival and continues to tour with other arts projects. The image below shows one of the bunting squares created and the group workshop.



The following montage in clockwise direction shows Pledgehog and the Shed, Grandfather Clock, Mementos clay work, and Hope without Deterioration textile sculpture all in action at *Green Pledge* outreach events.



The project also created an image layer on [Know Your Place Gloucestershire](#) with additional content including records deposited by the Stroud Valleys Project. The image layer covers a very broad spectrum of environmental activity in the county images of allotments and pathways being established as well flooding and protests to protect trees. The final analysis shows that in the 10 months after launch in November 2024 average active users per month grew by 17% (from 271 to 317).

3.3 People will have developed new skills

<i>Green Pledge Outcome</i>	<i>Measures of success</i>	<i>Met?</i>
Volunteers: (existing and new) will have developed skills and confidence, includes young people and students.	66% of volunteers reporting increased skills and confidence across a range of areas compared to prior to training or involvement.	Met but sample small
Volunteer engagement increases with increase in new volunteers as a result of focus on climate issues.	2680 volunteer hours delivered.	Exceeded
	30% of volunteers will not have interacted with archives before.	Exceeded
Project staff including freelancers and apprentice gain new workplace skills associated with best archival practice and specific skills in responding to climate issues	All project staff, freelancers and apprentice independently state that they have developed previously absent or underdeveloped skills and that there has been effective knowledge and skills transfer between those with archival skills to those with climate action skills and vice versa.	Met

Green Pledge's skills development activities across different target groups are substantial as shown in the table below:

Target Group	Skills Developed
Staff	Project management, mentoring, carbon literacy, green strategy implementation
Archivist	Cataloguing complex archives, system design, guidance writing
Green Team	Carbon literacy, environmental audit, sustainable practice sharing
Apprentice	Archives, preservation, public service, guide/toolkit creation, Level 3 qualification
Volunteers	Cataloguing, event planning, map interpretation, digital skills (Know Your Place)

Supported Volunteers	Teamwork, heritage handling, wellbeing-focused skills
Remote Volunteers	Indexing, digital content creation, archival research (from home)
Students / Young People	Research, exhibition development, carbon awareness, oral history gathering
Community Participants	Gardening, food growing, creative crafts (eco-bunting), event planning
Environmental Partners	Archive awareness, records preservation, public engagement
Public Participants	Research, oral history, environmental awareness, carbon footprint reduction

By the end of the project GA had collected formal data from only 4 volunteers about their experience support *Green Pledge*. The limited sample, however, revealed that:

- 3/4 had previously known about GA or visited the Hub prior to volunteering;
- 4/4 stated that the desire to develop new skills and to gain experience of the heritage sector was “very important” in their decision to volunteer ranking higher than the desire to learn about history, do something meaningful and to give something back to the community;
- 4/4 “strongly agreed” that they had learnt how to do new things and developed new skills
- 4/4 “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they “have a better understanding of the environmental records I have worked with”;
- 4/4 “strongly agreed or “agreed” that they “had gained new skills and knowledge I can use in the future and “I have gained experience of the heritage sector”;
- 3/4 “strongly agreed” that they had “enjoyed themselves” and “given something back to the community” but one “neither agreed nor disagreed” with those statements.
- One respondent “disagreed” that their well-being has improved as a result of volunteering.

The Project Officer undertook informal short audio interviews with 3 regular volunteers with Project Grow. This demonstrated that the volunteers all of whom were at risk of social isolation had learnt:

- How to tend the soil
- Plant identification, growing fruit and vegetables, seasonality
- Avoidance of pesticides
- Healthy eating and new recipes
- The importance of social contact and being part of a team with improved well-being – social skills

Overall, volunteers contributed an impressive **3661 hours of time to the *Green Pledge* project** demonstrating that the project **its 2680 target hours (137% achieved) by the end of October 2025. The monetised value of 3661 hours is £73,220 (at standard Heritage Fund rate of £20 per hour)**, which equates to the 2 years and 2 months of the Archives and Records Association recommended salary mid-range point for a Lower Management Level 1 archivist.

The project involved 193 volunteers of which 87 were new volunteers (including 20 CCP gardening volunteers and 9 students on placements).

Compared to a target that 30% of volunteers will not have interacted with archives before, by the end of the project 45% had not.

The Archive Apprenticeship Ethan Langfield undertook an 18-month post to gain a Level 3 qualification in Library, Information and Archive Services. Ethan has received a distinction in all 3 professional discussions with his tutor, a distinction in his essay on the Nature of Collections and attended a 2-day course by Sounds of the Southwest a Heritage Funded programme for audio preservation and digitisation. A snapshot of Ethan's experience in his own words is given below.

Green Pledge Apprenticeship Interview Ethan Langfield

What made you decide to apply for the apprenticeship?

I have a background in human geography and had followed my passion for history in other ways by volunteering with heritage railways.

What was the focus of your apprenticeship?

The focus was on creating the thematic research guides to the GA's environmental collections. In the end I created 9 Green Guides on themes like orchards, woodlands, and lost railways in South Gloucestershire and Gloucestershire. I made efforts to improve and update existing guides, as well as creating accessible versions with larger text and clearer fonts. Of course this meant a lot of in-depth research on environmental records, such as an orchard book from 1909-1929, and collaborating with local history societies to enhance understanding of the collections.

Have you gained new skills and knowledge? If so, will these be helpful to you in the future?

Working on *Green Pledge* allowed me not just to develop research skills and knowledge about the environmental records but other things like stakeholder communication, problem-solving, and building relationships with external partners. I also gained skills and experience in delivery content for archive events and gained experience working with the audio-visual collections.

Did you sign up to the *Green Pledge*?

Yes

Did your involvement in the *Green Pledge* make you more likely to consider how your action affect environmental sustainability?

Yes, and I have been implementing changes like using a refill shop to reduce plastic waste, which has also helped him connect with others and exchange sustainable recipes.

Do you plan a career in the heritage or environment sectors after your apprenticeship?

I am already now working as an Archives Assistant in the Learning and Engagement team!

How did you find the experience?

It has been intense managing the practical experience with the academic workload, but so rewarding

What would you give the experience out of 10?

9/10

What would have made your experience better?

Nothing really, Marion helped me so much in improving my historical research and writing, especially in understanding how to write for different audiences. She supported me in presenting an event in April about the environmental impact of food production from the medieval era to the present day. I had never done something like that before.

The events have been well managed, but it would have been beneficial to have had more preparation time as they seem to have come thick and fast.

A key element of the project's skills development was to offer meaningful undergraduate work experience. *Green Pledge* has mainly partnered with the University of Gloucestershire Environmental Science department to achieve this. 9 student placements were completed mainly for 2nd year undergraduates to fulfil 75-hour external placement requirement. All placement students undertook an online version of the FRESK training to get them up to date with climate science. The placements have been covering a wide range of tasks including;

- a biodiversity audit of the garden and helping with community growing project;
- Bannister journals data entry sharing data with British trust for ornithology;
- Weather records data entry
- Uploading photos to the green layer of Know Your Place;
- Helping with oral history and podcast interviews including with recording and transcriptions

To get a sense of how the project as supported skills development 3 placement students were interviewed to create pen portrait of their experience -as shown below.

Green Pledge Volunteer Interview BN

What was your role?

As part of the *Green Pledge* project, I came into a project started by another student who had decided to focus on the 64 ornithological journals of a young man called Bannister writing in the 1930s and 1940s (as sample page of his journal is shown below)

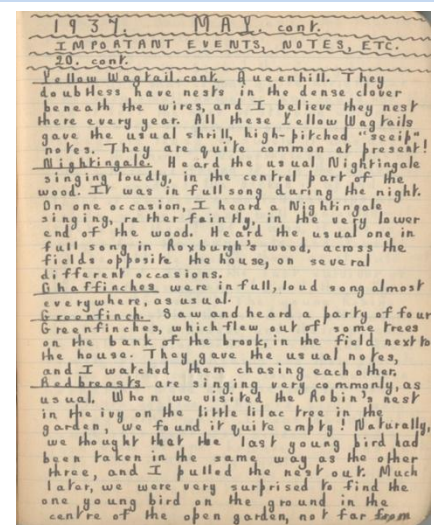
I digitised parts of the journal, created an excel spreadsheet for species recorded and compared this to current BTO records. I then got interested in Bannister himself and with some help from the Heritage Hub found out a bit about his family history. The hardest part was looking for patterns of birds in decline, I finished by helping at an event about agriculture.

How long did it last?

75 hours of 2nd year structured placement from February 2025 to May 2025. I am a Human Geography undergraduate at the University of Gloucestershire.

How did you find out about the placement?

From my tutor knew about *Green Pledge* and once my original choice of placement fell through, I got talking to Christina.



What was your motivation?

I wanted to do a placement properly linked to my area of study and I thought archives sounded like something accessible and interesting. *"I had never been to an archive."*

Do you have better understanding of Gloucestershire environmental history as a result of the placement?

"Yes, so much better – not just about Bannister and his journals but other records like agricultural maps, published books, city records and from other people in the search room a got a sense of conservation, previous road layers and even role of suffragettes".

Have you gained new skills and knowledge? If so, will these be helpful to you in the future?

I was introduced to microfilm! My organisational, time management and excel skills all were much improved. I think my placement knowledge will influence the scope of my dissertation.

"My only other experience of the world of work is in a weekend retail position. During the placement I started to understand what it means to behave professionally as the staff were all so accommodating and helpful treating me with respect."

Did you gain an understanding of how the archives you worked on relate to current issues?

Yes, as I was making a direct comparison between 1930s records and current ones.

Did you sign up to the Green Pledge?

Yes, I did but I have not seen much promotion of it or media attention – it needs a much bigger push. I think most of the energy to promote it has been with local audiences and as the project is only funded for 2 years it's going to be hard to maintain momentum."

Did your involvement in the Green Pledge make you more likely to consider how your action affect environmental sustainability?

Yes, it really did.

Do you plan a career in the heritage or environment sectors?

I am hoping to work in a planning or policy role that deal with conservation and human need such as value and impact of Forest Schools.

Did you enjoy yourself?

"Yes, really liked it. The staff were all lovely and friendly – this made up for sometimes tedious inputting. It was an amazing and cool experience and helped shape my perspective on archival work in a really positive way. My favourite thing was finding random funny notes Bannister had added to his journals"

What would you give the experience out of 10?

9/10

What would have made your experience better?

I suppose the content I was researching was not incredibly specific to what I am studying but the environment was brilliant.

Green Pledge Volunteer Interview PH

What was your role?

As part of the *Green Pledge* project, I undertook an analysis of historic weather records from the late 19th century and compared these to current weather records from a weather station broadly in the same locality of Harpbury. It showed that temperatures were warmer and there had been change in rainfall patterns- clear evidence of climate change. What I discovered was passed onto another student who created a display that was shown at a public event I attended.

How long did it last?

75 hours of 2nd year structured placement between February 2024 and August 2024. I was as Human Geography undergraduate at the University of Gloucestershire.

How did you find out about the placement?

Via my tutor.

What was your motivation?

I wanted to do a placement to help build my CV and the chance to work with archives interested me as I have always liked history.

Do you have better understanding of Gloucestershire environmental history as a result of the placement?

"Oh yes very much so as I was allowed to delve around and found out about the amount of environmental activism there has been in Gloucestershire which most people really are not aware of." The Green Pledge has really helped to expose this publicly.

Have you gained new skills and knowledge? If so, will these be helpful to you in the future?

I learnt about the functions of an archive and just how accessible they are. I learnt about analysing and comparing data sets and the structuring of databases.

Did you gain an understanding of how the archives you worked on relate to current climate issues?

"100% I did! The research was real evidence of climate change."

Did you sign up to the Green Pledge?

Yes, at one of the events.

Did your involvement in the *Green Pledge* make you more likely to consider how your actions affect environmental sustainability?

Yes, to a certain extent although I was already pretty conscious of my actions.

Do you plan a career in the heritage or environment sectors?

I hope to work in environmental activism and community engagement.

Did you enjoy yourself?

"I loved it! The team were so lovely, and I am now friends with one of them. I felt very welcome, and I think the team were really sensitive to the fact I was a student and balanced the workload well."

What would you give the experience out of 10?

9/10

What would have made your experience better?

Nothing went wrong – it was all really good. I was very happy with it.

Green Pledge Volunteer Interview SH

What was your role?

As part of the *Green Pledge* project, I did various tasks including working on digital interviews using Premiere Pro audiovisual editing software, transcripts for podcast interviews, photocopying large maps for the science festival event and searching for relevant audio clips in the archives. The image below show Saffron Interviewing Ian Boyd.



How long did it last?

75 hours of 2nd year structured placement between January 2025 and April 2025. I am a Geography undergraduate at the University of Gloucestershire.

How did you find out about the placement?

I emailed my module tutor who sent me a list of possible places, and I contacted Christina.

What was your motivation?

I wanted to do a placement linked to sustainability to add to my CV with something that has impact.

Do you have better understanding of Gloucestershire environmental history as a result of the placement?

"Definitely, I had no idea about archives and had never visited one, I found it really interesting"

Have you gained new skills and knowledge? If so, will these be helpful to you in the future?

"I gain skills in using Premiere Pro, transcription, and learnt about how to get the best out of sound and audio equipment as part of the interviewing process. I am quite shy and attending the interviews made me more confident in meeting new people."

Did you gain an understanding of how the archives you worked on relate to current issues?

Yes, for the science festival I found historic audio from a beekeeping talking about the terrible effect of pesticides on his bee colonies back in the 1960s.

Did you sign up to the *Green Pledge*?

Yes. I went to see the Pledgehog being carved by the artist.

Did your involvement in the Green Pledge make you more likely to consider how your actions affect environmental sustainability?

Yes, it sort of underlined what I do already.

Do you plan a career in the heritage or environment sectors?

I hope to work in sustainability and environmental research.

Did you enjoy yourself?

"Yes definitely. It was good to be busy and active."

What would you give the experience out of 10?

9/10

What would have made your experience better?

"Maybe a little bit more structure at times would have been good. Sometimes we worked out on the day what I would be doing. However, that really is a minor thing. I would recommend a placement with the archives to others."

The project also offered a week-long placement for a young person with additional needs, TP. The image below is his own self-reflection, which speaks for itself: [redacted to remove personal information – top sentence and last paragraph]

This week, i have had recieved the excellent work experince oppotuntity to work a week at Gloucestershire archives!

I have had a great time working here and i have learnt a lot. The staff here are really nice and helpful too!

In terms of what i have done, here is a quick over view.

Tuesday - Gardening, (Picking weeds/and planting weeds.)
 Wednesday - Mapping/Excel, (Marking locations of past and possibly future tours as well as typing the pledgehogs into excel.)

Thursday - Documenting copies of old parish magazines and editing/refining of the transcript of their podcast.

Friday (Today as of writing,) - Packaging and organising archives of old court cases. And now this as well as the survey after.

In conclusion, very good and thank you for having me! :D

Special thanks to ^{Gloucester College} ~~Gloucester~~ for setting this up and helping me get so far.
 The staff of this place, for allowing me to work here
 - for experince and being so kind and helpful.

Green Pledge placements have demonstrated robust skills development in research, digital tools, communication, environmental literacy, and workplace professionalism. Participants not only gained hands-on experience but also clarity and enthusiasm about future career paths in heritage, conservation, or sustainability

The measure of success related to staff, freelancers, and the apprentice developing previously absent or underdeveloped skills with associated knowledge transfer has been met. Evidence collected includes:

- Completion of the apprenticeship with distinction;
- 16 Green Team volunteers and partners receiving carbon literacy training with 100% stating as result they have a better understanding of climate science;
- Knowledge exchange to project team and wider GA staff from environmental partners about best practice, monitoring and simple tips;
- Significant informal skills exchange e.g. between the five artists commissioned to create different interpretation and project staff (flow of archive skills in research and understanding of environmental heritage one way and co-created creative practice the other way).
- The staff evaluation session provided strong evidence that the project has resulted in knowledge and skills exchange between Hannah Basnett, Project Officer and Christina Wheeler, Project Manager (both with environmental awareness backgrounds) and the archival side of the team. All staff score this aspect of the project highly (all scored 5 or 4 where 5 was the best score possible). Comments included:

"People were always incredibly helpful and adept at sharing skills and knowledge."

"Hannah has impacted on all our thinking."

"Hannah, Christina and Marion did a wonderful job of sharing their passion and experience."

"I have learnt so much from others and this has had a real impact on my passion for history."

3.4. Our organisation will be more resilient

<i>Green Pledge</i>	Measures of success	Met?
Outcome		
By embedding green thinking GA will have a more sustainable operational model to make GA more resilient	Archives strategy and 10-year plan re-aligned to sustainable goals with embedded green thinking to reduce environmental impact	Met
	Formal review of collecting policy and adoption/plan for changes in light of dynamic collecting approach.	Met
	Reduction in net electricity and water consumption	Met
	Reducing waste generated including plastics, printing, and ensuring electronic records no longer required are deleted	
	Incorporating public, volunteers and partners suggestions of green improvements to our service and learning from best practice	
	Parsimonious preservation (green) techniques for 'born digital' and 'digitised' records	
Green Pledge partner organisations wish to maintain a permanent role in supporting our goals	Relevant partners evidence intentions to keep an on-going relationship.	Met

A key determinant of the project's success was whether its delivery led to formal policy development that will guide a long-term approach to more sustainable practice. GA's current Archive Strategy and associated 10-year plan runs from 2021-2031 and its next formal review point is March 2026, as a precursor to re-application for Archive Accreditation.

That review will make some changes to the Strategy in light of GA's recently approved [Environmental Policy](#) which focuses on sustainable practice across the service's function including specific action areas related to: archive building performance; collections; community garden; digital; energy and water use; procurement and project management; research and training; transport and travel; and waste management. The embedding of green thinking within the service

over the last 2 years has reached the point where there is an internal ‘green team’ and the review of the strategy will now naturally reflect the staff team’s high priority for environmental action.

Towards the end of the project, GA reviewed and made some changes to the wording of its Collecting Policy (shortly to be published on its website). The amendments were in response to specific gaps in the collections and the intended means to address these, drawing on lessons learnt in *Green Pledge*. The project made excellent use of its project staff’s own networks and trusted relationships to reach relevant organisations and their audiences with relevant records or the means to identify them. As the Head of Service commented: *“It is much quicker to inspire project officers with the archives than for archivists to establish relevant relationships and trust in green networks.”*

A major strand of embedding more sustainable practice was known internally as *“Getting our own house in order”* a set of practical actions to reduce consumption and energy use.

This strand began with project staff, the wider GA team and partners generating a co-created green action plan as shown in the image below:



The Action Plan led to:

- Training for staff through a collaborative climate [FRESK](#) workshop to help them better understand their impact on the planet and what they can do to make a difference, as shown below:
- Quarterly ongoing waste audits to significantly reduce onsite waste and improve recycling – this has been led by Hannah Basnett has had significant impact by taking a collaborative and small steps at a time approach. Her approach has included an internal *Did you Know* campaign to enlighten all staff about perhaps unknown environmental impacts from their behaviour. Particularly successful has been the reduction in single use plastics, paper towels, bin bags, food waste and toilet roll recycling as shown here.
- Introduction and use of the [Julie's Bicycle online climate tools](#) to measure GA reduction in power usage
- A biodiversity audit of the community garden which has its own [iNaturalist](#) webpage and is recording a digital archive of biodiversity change over time.
- Encouraging cycling in the '[Love to Ride](#)' September scheme which saw the GA team come 1st nationwide in the category for 29-49 employees.
- Investigation of suppliers about their green credentials and a greener approach to procurement decisions
- Introduction of lunchtime walks to recycle soft plastic.
- An all-staff exercise to reduce GA's digital carbon footprint (through a digital 'clean' of filing and emails) that resulted in service wide 82% reduction in footprint. 663 GB was cleaned and 185kg of carbon permanently saved each year.
- Excellent collaboration with the Council's sustainability team and climate emergency group. The use of staff and partner training ([carbon literacy](#) and [Climate Fresk](#)), conference papers, the hosting of a workshop for conservators and archivists on shutting

SAVE THE TOILET ROLLS



down heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), and case studies to help promote carbon reduction.

Prior to the Green Pledge project, GA had laid strong green foundations on which to build principally involving mostly passive strongrooms since the 1990s, a wonderful inner city green space community garden developed by archives staff (in a voluntary capacity) and Cotswolds Gardening School students in 2019 as part of the *For the Record* major project and all lights had been replaced with LEDs in 2022 to 2023.

During the project, **key achievements to reduce power and water consumption** further included:

- the removal of high energy consumption and costly HVAC systems (Heating, Ventilation and Air conditioning) from remaining strongrooms.
- In early 2025, significant arrays of solar panels (as shown below) were installed on three roofs (providing shade to keep strongroom temperatures lower in the summer and enabling GA to avoid the consequences of a prolonged local power cut).



- Installation of a condenser type dehumidifier to supply dried air to the two interconnected strongrooms plus three new ones. Adapted for ducted supply, a very compact unit (see

photo below) with an integrated chiller and air intake from the corridor, following specialist advice from Nick Grant of Elemental Solutions.

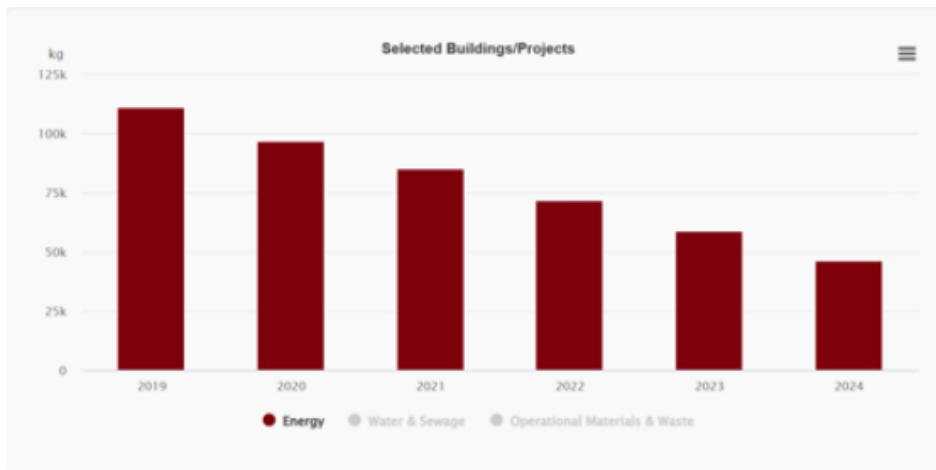


- Low-cost, low-energy solution for GA's specialist photographic store with required temperature of 10 degrees Celsius. The over-sized plant was nearing the end of its useful life and after years of providing stable conditions it began to fail more frequently and to severely test the ingenuity of the service engineers. Wine-cellar technology was commissioned instead and installed in 2025.
- In September 2025, replacement of 8 elderly stand-alone dehumidifiers in the 8 remaining strongrooms with a similar low-cost low-energy dried air system. This saves significant staff time (no longer need to empty dehumidifiers regularly), reduces running costs and eliminates a small inherent fire risk.
- Currently examining use of grey water to flush toilets and water garden (in addition to water butts already installed).

The new system providing the required environmental conditions for the archives is not so reliant on complicated engineering. It has greatly reduced procurement and servicing costs, is much simpler, cost effective, stable and kinder to the planet.

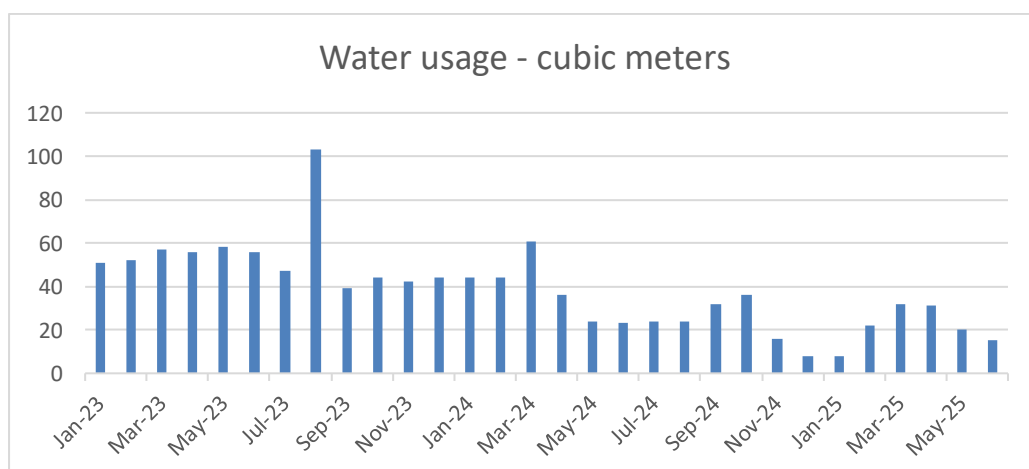
GA also installed 4 electric vehicle charging points during 2025 of which 2 were for people with disabilities with separate funding from the County Council.

Cumulatively, over the period between 2019 and 2024, the switch from HVAC technology to low-cost environmental management solutions, together with other measures has significantly reduced GA’s carbon footprint from 111 tonnes of CO₂e in 2019 to 46 tonnes in 2024 (a 59% reduction).



There is likely to be a further improvement in 2025 figures that will take account of the completion of work on the photographic store, the updating of the dehumidification methodology in 12 strongrooms and the installation of the solar panels in early 2025.

However, **water and effluent usage** has shown a decline in consumption during the project period (the spike in late Summer 2023 was attributable to the removal of asbestos and temporary installation of contractor’s showers).



Since completing the solar panel installation from March 2025 to end of November 2025 GA has generated **138,660kWh** of electricity.

It is fair to say that there has been less progress made at this point in the project in understanding and reducing the environmental impact of digital record keeping and e-preservation, as opposed to business operation digital files and emails.

Subject to capacity and resources, as well as alignment of goals, all the partners consulted via a feedback session including Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, GCC Sustainability Team, Project Grow, Cheltenham Youth Group, County Library Service and the 6 commissioned artists would welcome an ongoing or future partnership with GA.

4.0 Dynamic Collections Approach

Green Pledge made good on the principles of the Heritage Fund's Dynamic Collections programme in the following ways:

Collections to be used by and meaningful to a wide range of people

Outcome 1 analysis demonstrates that the focus on engagement and outreach activities reached a higher volume of people than anticipated, that the demographics were wider than GA's main user bases and that nearly half of those surveyed at events had not come into contact with archive before.

Key examples of reach included talks for dementia and social isolation groups, workshops with climate action groups, events targeting environmental professionals, attendance at events ranging from community days to the Cheltenham Science Festival and a touring exhibition and talks and workshops delivered to groups and societies throughout Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire.

Different perspectives are heard and a variety of stories told

Trusted relationships with GA's well-networked project staff were particularly important for collecting interviews from voices not previously represented in the archives. These were then transformed into podcasts. <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/our-projects/the-green-pledge-project/podcast/>. Sixteen podcasts have been created, including John Meadley - a life in agriculture and overseas development; two dawn choruses recorded seventy years apart; Gail Bradbrook founder of Extinction Rebellion; Gloucestershire Youth Climate Group's Festival: What Can I Do?; George Peterken on woodland ecology; Mollie Meagre on Save the Wye campaign; Cate Cody, green party member and initiator many green projects including Plastic-free Tewkesbury, Toads on the Road and repair cafes.

Due to the potential political or what some might regard as controversial nature of the subject matter, political clearance was gained before the project was submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This has enabled a wide spectrum of views and experiences to be gathered and preserved as an important part of the county's history.

By commissioning artists to develop a response to environmental stories, their different perspective has brought the stories featured in the exhibition to life for a wide range of people. The artworks have subsequently been donated to Kingsholm Primary School and the Dean Heritage Centre so have an ongoing impact beyond the Archives.

During the two-year project, 175 collections and publications relating to the environment have so far been collected and accessioned. Significant collections include Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Met Office rainfall records, John Moore [naturalist], Gloucestershire Youth Climate Groups, Friends of Robinswood Hill, Wessex Water, Commons and Village Green maps and registers and Royal Forestry Society Gloucestershire. Unfortunately, the potential partnership with Ecotricity and Forest Green Rovers (the world's first vegan football club) did get off the ground due to personnel changes.

Many of GA's student placements had a direct bearing on opening up previously poorly understood collections, or perhaps more accurately allow for them to be viewed through a new lens of their value as a historical resource to influence contemporary practice. This has included documenting the significant role Gloucestershire people and organisations have played in environmental matters, and informing meteorologists working on climate change models about our unique historic weather records.

A flooding workshop for water professionals and those planning preventative measures, followed by a similar workshop for those engaged professionally in trees, woodland management and forestry will allow the collections to inform current environmental planning. Digital copies of orchard records have been sent to those working with endangered species in Kent.

Collections are actively managed and reviewed.

The sustainability ethos of *Green Pledge* generated a whole-process rethink about collections management. For example, it led GA to consider the pallets on which its archival boxes are delivered and to raise this topic with UK archivists.

Other considerations included:

- Adopting a “don't collect more than you need” approach making sure every document or collection deserves its place on the shelf and reviewing collections as they come in to not store unnecessary material.
- Ensuring collections are catalogued otherwise they are not accessible (an ever-present issue in the archives sector, not easily resolved)
- Measures discussed under Outcome 4 to make storage as environmentally sustainable as possible.

Born-digital and electronic records deserve special attention in terms of active management. Staff members attended several courses on the environmental impact of digitisation, e-preservation and AI during the project, and GA will continue to follow cutting edge research in this area. It was therefore particularly important that GA considered carefully any digitisation undertaken – given

that data centres take up significant power and need water to cool them too. It is very difficult to calculate the carbon footprint of preserving GA's digital archives. The data for making such calculations is not freely available and varies considerably depending where in the world your suppliers' data centres are. However, GA did what it could by carrying out a 'digital dump' exercise reducing storage of emails and documents on servers by c.82%. This did not impact on the storage of digital archives which have been selected for permanent preservation. GA reviewed the digitisation proposed for this project and reduced the digitisation programme, partly to reduce our carbon footprint, but also because it was found that some of the tithe material was already available elsewhere in electronic format.

What might be considered more traditional methods of active management were also undertaken to good effect. Environmental collections were reviewed (appraised) and catalogued during the project. Some maps and plans which do not relate to Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire were identified during the sorting process prior to cataloguing and their transfer elsewhere. They will be transferred to more appropriate repositories.

Without catalogues, no one knows what is in collections and cannot provide access to the public. Project funding makes it feasible to catalogue very large collections, such as the Environment Agency and Severn Trent as they take months of dedicated work to address.

An additional output of the project has been to rationalise a large proportion of the map storage, a project GA has been keen to address for 20 years. Most maps and plans have been re-boxed in large boxes replacing unwieldy and failing map cabinets. Since the old cabinets were beyond repair or onwards use as map cabinets, GA arranged for them to be taken for scrap metal re-use with no financial cost.

5.0 Reflecting on Success

Analysing the evaluation data and evidence to test whether the *Green Pledge* met its outcomes provides the core of this report, but there are always other ways of looking at success factors.

An end of project reflection session led by the evaluator with staff, and separately with partners, was able to draw out further aspects of the project's success.

At the vanguard

There was a recognition from staff and partners that *Green Pledge* was in many ways at the cutting edge of the archive sector's practice and that this aspect was amplified by the project focus areas that affected audiences, collections, interpretation and outreach, cataloguing and accessioning, research, new partnerships, and the building's own consumption. Staff were rightly keen to emphasise that *Green Pledge* inspired personal behaviour change and led to collective action.

"We have embedded a green approach to our whole service and inspired a wide range of others to take action." Heather Forbes, Head of Service

The view of the Sustainability Officer from GCC was also that GA was ahead of the game in terms of taking practical action to implement corporate environmental principles.

Several of the commissioned artists had worked previously with other culture and heritage organisations and commented on the particular ethos of GA:

"The project is an example to other archives. GA is a safe space and very inclusive." Amy Freeman

Bringing collections to life and contemporary relevance

The team and partners were rightly proud of their success in bringing to life the environmental history of the Gloucestershire in new ways for audiences:

"Our outreach has been strong and imaginative always with our audiences in mind." Marion Hill, Learning Officer

“Green Pledge touched blue light on paper. The fascination with archives and history that this project has inspired through our public engagement has been great.” Christina Wheeler, Project Manager

“It has been so successful, has energised the theme and has brought to the forefront so much hitherto hidden archive material in a fun, enjoyable and accessible way that will be very much missed.” John Putley, Learning and Outreach Officer

Collectively the team were keen to emphasise how the project had generated interest in the environmental records as scientific evidence for current planning and practice. The water and flooding day for professionals was a good example of this (see below).



In addition, connections were made with Met Office, the British Trust for Ornithology who are examining the Bannister journals (recorded birds), the People’s Trust for Endangered Species are now aware of historic orchard records, and the Guardians of the River Chelt are looking at maps and records to inform flood risk and management.

People

The Project Staff's skills and expertise were crucial in the project's success (see image below which shows from left to right Ethan Langfield, Marion Hill, Jenny Rutland, Christina Wheeler and Hannah Basnett).



More than this the combination of their passion and commitment to sustainability, the environment and broadening audiences and the GA permanent staff's openness to change were at the heart of why things worked so well. There was a genuine sense that the team as a whole was making change through their personal behaviour and underpinned the project's credibility. There was also strong evidence of a 'can do' approach and not being overwhelmed by the perceived degree of action required

"The level of commitment and ownership that each team member has approached the project with coupled with their creativity and professionalism has made the project what it is." Christina Wheeler, Project Manager

Partnerships

Green Pledge cemented GA's commitment to partnership working with external organisations that can strengthen audience development, lead to new networks, connections and conversations (e.g., work with Project Grow, Wiggly's charity, Voices Gloucester, Kingsholm Primary School). Partners were very complimentary about how they found working with GA and the value it brought. The quote below was typical:

"It was a pleasure to partner on various events, and Hannah's enthusiasm and knowledge was infectious. It was especially welcome to see an emphasis on empowering and engaging young people around the issues they care about to bring together historical events with present day problems. The project has led to further partnership working and collaboration and where it has really excelled is in the novel and fun approaches to public engagement for example the festival garden which people responded to with genuine surprise, delight and interest." RK, Planet Cheltenham Youth Group

Community Garden

There was general agreement that the social impact of the Community Garden working with Project Grow and Wiggly has far surpassed anyone's expectations and that this was a credit to Hannah Basnett, Project Officer. It has done more than other aspects of the project to cement GA's commitment to the ABCD model of community asset development.

"What we have fostered is beautiful and enriching the community." Hannah Basnett, Project Officer

Profile

The project enjoyed a very high profile throughout – more than GA has known before, as demonstrated by number of acquaintances commenting on articles, exhibitions, events etc. Two

articles in the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust newsletter had a major impact as did participation in the well-attended and hugely successful Cheltenham Science Festival.

GA has responded to requests for case studies to Gloucestershire County Council, the Archives and Records Association (ARA), The National Archives and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (sustainability officer). The project also led to the recommendation that GA apply for ARA's Record Keeping Service of the Year, 2025, which GA subsequently won following a public vote.

Momentum

Staff and partners both expressed a sense that, despite the project ending and an inevitable loss of resource, a momentum had been created that would be carried forward not just in formal policy and planning terms but in the ethos of the service.

"The Green Pledge Project Team has made a massively positive impact on the Archives service, particularly in relation to our ongoing sustainability. Knowing what we do now, we can't wind the clock back." Heather Forbes, Head of Service

6.0 Lessons Learnt

The *Green Pledge* project team was asked by the evaluator to consider what lessons they were learning as they went along and to record their thoughts in a document which was live during the project duration. In reality, most members of the team contributed to this process near project completion and in parallel with, or after, the reflection session.

The lessons learnt can be broadly categorised as follows:

Staffing and Structure

- Recruiting project staff who are already well connected within the environmental and community sectors had an immediate and transformational impact. Their existing networks accelerated the pace of engagement and opened up new opportunities quickly.

- A multidisciplinary team brought invaluable perspectives, enabling richer discussions, better problem-solving, and more creative approaches to collecting and outreach.
- Allowing team members to follow their passions led to stronger results; people still deliver on less favoured tasks but excel when given room to pursue strengths.
- Volunteer and intern involvement benefits from an initial exploratory phase. A “messy” start helps them discover what interests them before their work becomes more focused.
- Flexible working patterns, including shared core days, strengthened communication and overall project cohesion.
- Comprehensive induction—especially for freelance roles—must include key systems (e.g. Epexio) and familiarity with priority collections.

Project Planning and Time Management

- Early stages of the project required more time than anticipated; the Project Staff needed space to learn about the collection strengths and gaps, refine research, and understand the reality of workflows.
- Document preparation, editing, and event reporting were significantly more labour-intensive than predicted.
- A fixed two-year project felt too short to build new networks, test and refine new forms of outreach formats, and develop sustained community engagement.
- Having pre-identified lists of relevant documents (e.g. environmental records organised by themes) prepared at project start-up would have saved substantial time later.
- There was insufficient time built in to work as constructively as possible with volunteers and partners.

Environmental Focus and Collections

- Thinking “green” across all activities created truly meaningful change and sparked innovation.
- Research led to necessary shifts in plans, as seen with digitisation—flexibility reduced waste and lowered the carbon footprint.

- Environmental collections have immense relevance to present-day issues and showcasing them powerfully demonstrates their value.
- Sometimes it proved difficult to find collections that aligned with what themes partners wanted to explore so this required some late on expectation setting and lateral thinking.
- The Dynamic Collections approach worked and should be adopted over the longer term to address collection gaps making the most of external expertise when it can best be deployed.
- The project underlined the need to see collecting as pro-active both for traditional formats and digital records – perhaps more so for the latter as they are inherently at more risk of loss.

Outreach and Engagement

- Outreach to new audiences unfamiliar with archives has huge potential when approached creatively.
- The value of engagement is not solely in numbers; smaller events often produce deeper, more impactful conversations of value.
- The 'Pledgehog' demonstrated that simple, creative, tactile methods can be far more effective than digital tools in public engagement.
- Events in green or beautiful outdoor spaces resonated strongly with participants.
- Third-party events were unpredictable; some did not deliver the engagement originally envisaged but experimentation is essential to find out what works.

Partnerships and Professional Engagement

- Partnerships varied widely in impact; some (e.g. Winterbourne, Yate Heritage Centre) were exceptionally productive and well worth sustaining.
- Targeted professional events—such as the Water Professionals Day and Tree Day—were effective for connecting collections to contemporary professional challenges.
- Such specialist days also served as excellent networking opportunities for attendees.

Organisational Impact and Legacy

- The enthusiasm, momentum, and community need generated by the project all point to a strong value in continuing this kind of work beyond a two-year limit.
- There is clear demand for more accessible archives, including possibilities like a “travelling archive,” especially for people unable to visit in person.
- Many insights from the project—particularly around networking, environmental focus, and targeted outreach—need to be embedded into ongoing service delivery.

7.0 Conclusions

The *Green Pledge* project has demonstrated real achievement and meaningful, measurable impact across all its intended outcomes, establishing Gloucestershire Archives at the forefront of environmentally responsible heritage practice. Over its two-year delivery period, the project has proven that archives are not simply repositories of the past but powerful tools for shaping the future. By bringing environmental heritage into focus and embedding sustainability into operational practice, the project has helped define what a County Archive service can and should be doing to react to one aspect of a rapidly changing world.

The evidence gathered throughout this evaluation shows that *Green Pledge* achieved its outcomes in a well-rounded and integrated fashion. Effort was balanced across all the outcomes. Nonetheless, one of the project's most significant successes has been the scale and diversity of engagement. The project reached thousands of people across a range of community, professional and public settings, and it helped build new awareness, behavioural change and deeper understanding of environmental themes. Importantly, the project expanded participation beyond traditional archive audiences; a considerable number of people involved had no prior contact with archives. This outcome underscores the value of the project's creative approach and the novel ways it connected archival collections to contemporary environmental conversations.

Another core strength of Green Pledge has been its role in driving organisational resilience. The project supported Gloucestershire Archives' long-term operational sustainability, not only through policies and plans but through concrete technical, infrastructural and procedural improvements.

The installation of energy-saving systems, solar technologies, more efficient environmental controls, and the systematic approach to reducing environmental footprint are lasting legacies. These changes were underpinned by a strategic mindset: sustainability was not treated as an add-on but as a core principle of how the organisation functions. This transformation was supported by a highly committed project team and leadership prepared to give space and autonomy for staff to innovate and experiment.

At the heart of the project's success is the dynamic collections approach, which shifted the organisation towards more active interpretation, partnership working and proactive collecting. The acquisition of new collections, the cataloguing and appraisal of environmental records, and the contribution of young people, volunteers, and environmental partners have ensured that the collections are more representative, relevant and accessible. The project showed that environmental records are not static historical documents but knowledge resources that can influence planning, research and decision-making today. Workshops with water and forestry professionals, for example, demonstrated how archival material can play a direct role in environmental management and climate planning.

The creative outreach components of the project added further value and impact. The Community Garden, eco-themed talks and workshops, artist commissions and the travelling exhibition were all symbolic of new ways of working. These activities did more than raise awareness: they generated enthusiasm, ownership and pride. Participants and partners consistently described the project as inspiring, inclusive and innovative, and this feedback is evidence of deeper engagement beyond mere participation.

The project's success was not without challenges. The pressures on staff to deliver, illness, some shifts in partnerships, and the ambitious scope of activity could have derailed progress. Instead, they were navigated effectively due to strong leadership, clear communication, adaptive planning and mutual respect among the team. These internal qualities are themselves an outcome of the project: strengthening the culture of collaboration, innovation and resilience within the service.

From the perspective of an archivist, perhaps the most important conclusion is that *Green Pledge* has expanded the role and identity of the archive. It demonstrated that records could play an active part in tackling the climate crisis, not merely by documenting the past but by influencing the present. Archives offer context, evidence, stories and inspiration. They can illuminate environmental change across time, connecting what is special about local history to global issues and support communities, professionals and policymakers in planning for the future. The project has shown that archives can be catalysts for environmental thinking and behaviour change.

The legacies of *Green Pledge* extend far beyond the project's timeframe. Skills, confidence and knowledge have increased across volunteers, staff and communities. Partnerships formed through the project are already generating new opportunities and networks. The enthusiasm and belief generated amongst staff and partners signal that the project has secured a degree of cultural shift, rather than just a temporary wave of activity. The project's ethos has become embedded in Gloucestershire Archives' policies, operations and identity.

As the project comes to a formal close, it leaves behind a strong platform for continued growth. The job of work is now to sustain momentum and ensure that the systems, relationships and learning developed through *Green Pledge* continue to flourish with dedicated ring-fenced additional funding. The project has demonstrated that with flair and energy archives can influence our environmental thinking and action and, without doubt, has positioned Gloucestershire Archives as a pioneering organisation in this regard within the heritage collections sector. *Green Pledge* has delivered on its ambition and, in doing so, has set down a model for others to follow.

ENDS