



Trustees' Annual Report 2024-5

**Activities in the year
1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025**

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About SHARE Oxford

We aim to reduce consumption and waste, by sharing and repairing the things we use so we don't have to buy them.

We hire out things that people only need occasionally - for example carpet cleaners, party gear or hedge trimmers - and repair those which would otherwise be thrown away.

Along with similar groups across the world, we are working to help solve the climate crisis. This is about our local community doing our bit, inspiring others to do the same and helping everyone live more sustainably.

With all the skills in this city, we think Oxford should be the greenest small city on the planet. With your support, we can make it happen.

What we do

We have summarised our purpose (charitable objects) in our constitution as:

The protection and preservation of the environment for the public benefit in Oxford and the surrounding area by the promotion of waste reduction, reuse, reclamation, recycling, use of recycled objects and the use of surplus at minimal and affordable cost.

This year we have continued to develop our Library of Things, Repair Cafés and Tech Rescue, as well as building our understanding of reuse, passing on unwanted kit to people who could use it. As ever, we're committed to sharing what we're learning with others working to build a circular economy:



Library of Things: our community hiring service in Jericho, and online at shareoxford.org where people can reserve the things they need and either come and pick them up or have them delivered and returned by bike courier.



Repair Events: every month, our skilled repair volunteers help fix broken electrical or mechanical things, IT, clothes, bikes, and even sharpen tools, helping people understand how things work and look after them so they last longer and don't need replacing.



Reuse: we benefit from the excellent networks in Oxfordshire, helping us work with others to keep stuff in use for longer. Our Tech Rescue is also proving to be a good model for finding homes for unwanted stuff, something we're looking to expand.

The Trustees have managed the charity with due regard to the [guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit](#). This report has been prepared in line with the guidance for small charities (SoRP FRS102) including a summary of the activities we have carried out for public benefit.

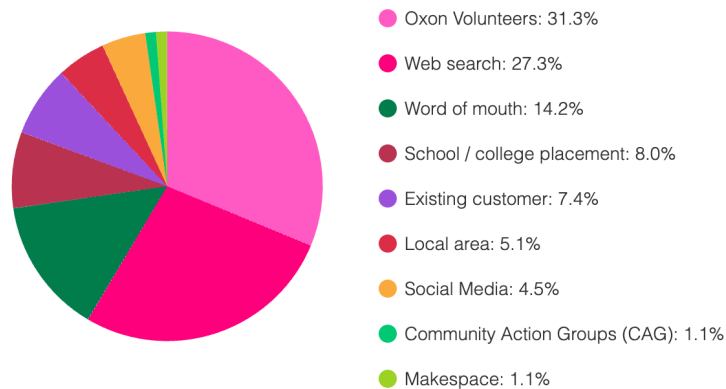
The Team and Volunteering

As ever, we are truly grateful for all the volunteers who make up SHARE Oxford, supported by our two part-time paid staff members Ben and Christine. We've continued to see a great level of interest from new volunteers via OCVA's [OxonVolunteers](#) website and elsewhere. This year, 91 volunteers logged more than 1789 hours of time (more than 40% up from 50 people and 1270 hours last year).

The 30 people who have been regularly volunteering for more than a year fill vital roles such as our core repair café, tech rescue and library teams. We are also benefiting from the skills new volunteers bring, for example Vanessa helping us to deliver a bumper Great Big Green Week campaign to reach more people, Kanchana updating our digital comms strategy, Slav setting up automations on some of our processes and Vitor reviewing our organisational planning.



Some of the team celebrating our 6th birthday party in February



Where our active volunteers found us

Achievements

Highlights

60%

increase in
Library of
Things visits

4

brand new skill
sharing
sessions

more than
530 things
fixed or
rehomed

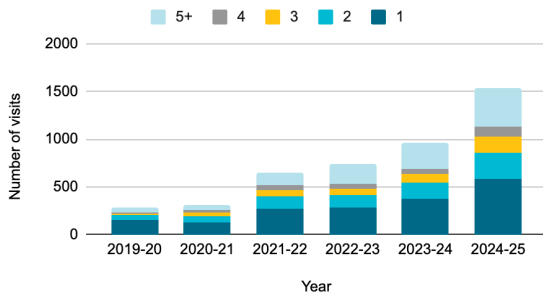
first

Case studies
from volunteers
& guests

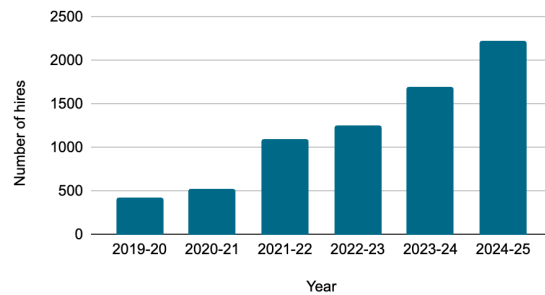
Library of Things

Visitors and hires: the 3-day-a-week opening that we started last year has continued to drive our growth this year, with visits up nearly 60% and number of things hired up 30%. We've been pleased to see growth in both new and repeat customers.

First time and repeat visits to the library



Number of Things Hired



Behind the scenes: the team have done a great job keeping up with this growth, with particular focus on:

- speedy and thorough checks when things are brought back
- Improved coordination between librarians and repairers to keep up with maintenance and repairs
- Improving our process for passing things on when they're no longer robust enough for community hire, but will still be good for someone at home.

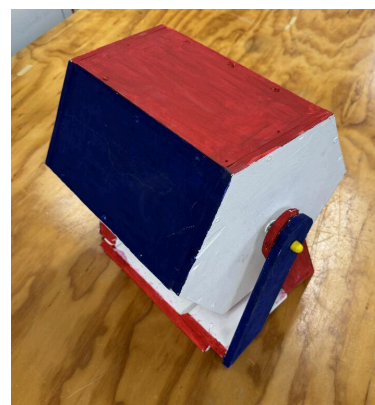
We're also very grateful to [Summertown & St Margaret's Community Forum](#) for another round of CIL funding which provided improved shelving, higher-quality protective equipment to go with the tools we hire out, and secure chemical storage cupboards.



New products and top-hires: we didn't make any major changes to our range this year, instead refining our stock to make sure everything we have is a really high standard. We did find space for some very popular animal hoppers and Andy's fabulous handmade tombola! A big thank you to everyone who donated items this year.

Parties continued to do well, with lots of games and fun ideas like the chocolate fountain as well as practical stuff like the plant-based plates and bowls in our party kit. In the garden it's great to see increasing numbers of local customers using our tools every year, as well as new people tackling projects. DIY of course continues to be strong as well as classics like spring cleaning in the home or garden.

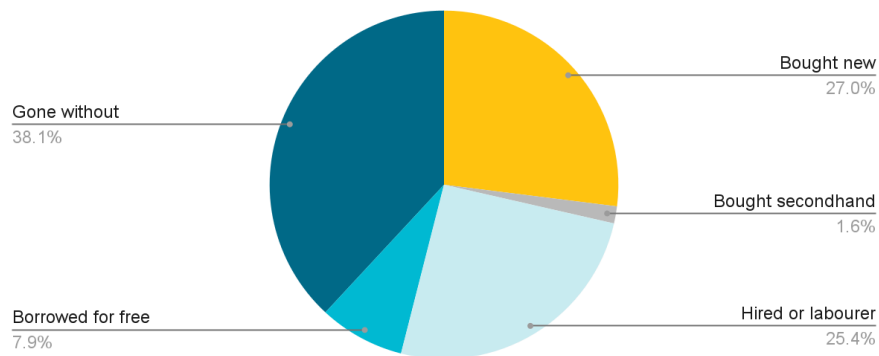
<i>Rank</i>	<i>Product</i>	<i>Hires</i>
1	Bunting	115
2	Pressure washer	78
3	Thermal imaging camera	77
4	Gazebo	70
5	Sander	68
6	Goggles	67
7	Carpet and upholstery cleaner	67
8	Drill	57
9	Projector	46
10	Strimmer	37
11	Lawn mower	35
12	RCD	34
13	Glasses	34
14	Fairy lights	34
15	Garden game	33
16	Dehumidifier	32
17	Hedge trimmer (pole)	29
18	Drinks Dispenser	29
19	Projector screen	28
20	Extension cable	27



Impact of hiring: we've continued to ask "what would you have done if we weren't here?" when we meet new customers, recording another 63 answers this year.

It's been interesting to see more people mentioning that they would rather go without than buy unnecessary stuff - often we allow them to have some fun without the footprint, or offer a more convenient option than trying to find something secondhand. We are also conscious of those who would have hired elsewhere - we are grateful for the funds raised from items like carpet cleaners but we don't wish to harm companies who share our mission.

What would you have done if we weren't here?



How people are using the library: the stories of people using our things continue to bring a smile:

Vasileios had some amazing results with the sewing machine for his mermaid costume cosplaying the [Queer-As-Folklore book cover](#). *"It is my first time using a sewing machine and many thanks for lending it to me. I used it to sew the fabric together for the mermaid body. I used different painting techniques with a mixture of spray painting and hand drawing. The scales are made with silicone, and I have made each one of them individually. The veins on the dragonfly wings are handpainted, too."*



Cathy and Alan planned a Family Bike Ride in support of Thame Greenway and were stunned when, rather than the 50 cyclists they expected, 400 turned up. “*We could never have managed without the large megaphone from Share Oxford to address the crowd at the beginning and end of the event.*”

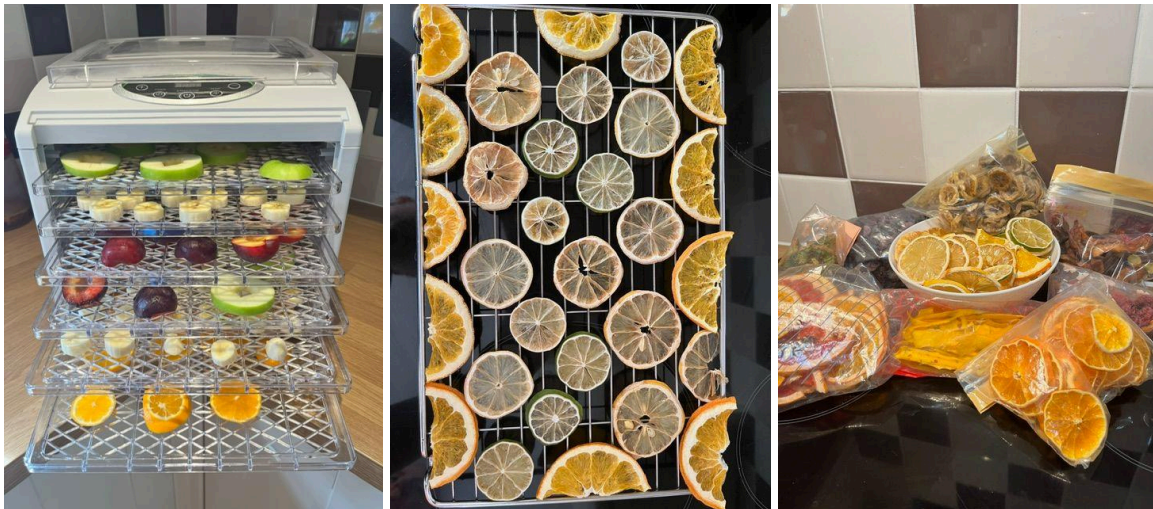


Phil & Jim’s School Reception children loved the parachute game when they headed out for a sunny afternoon on Port Meadow



Rom and family got cooking during their camping trip with our gas stove (sausage and beans for tea, apparently!)

Amelia had some great results trying her hand at dehydrating fruit for a super-healthy snack. *“this is the first time I’ve used a service like this and it was fantastic!”*



Priscille hired our stand mixer to bake beautiful Day of the Dead Bread rolls and may have won herself customer of the year award by bringing a delicious sample back for Ben to try!



Branton and friends took pumpkin carving to the next level, borrowing a drill and drywall saw to create an impressive halloween display:



Eleanor hired the circular saw to fix her fence: *“Being able to use a circular saw and repair a fence myself felt really empowering, probably my achievement of the year. Very grateful to the library of things.”*



Cassy and her partner hired our inflatable roof rack to shift an old bed and mattress on the roof of “Hannibal”: *“It would have cost us £44 to use the council’s bulky waste collection service for the bed and mattress or around £70 to hire a van. It was such a busted old thing, that not even Emmaus (charity) were able to take it in. Instead of forking out, we spent just a couple of pounds on the roof rack to take the bed to the tip ourselves. It was quite empowering to shift such a bulky item with our car!”*



Jess used the heat gun to refresh some handmade candles back to looking good as new:



Andrea, as well as hiring a drill and coping saw to get plenty of good DIY done, also created a beautiful foam rose using our glue gun!

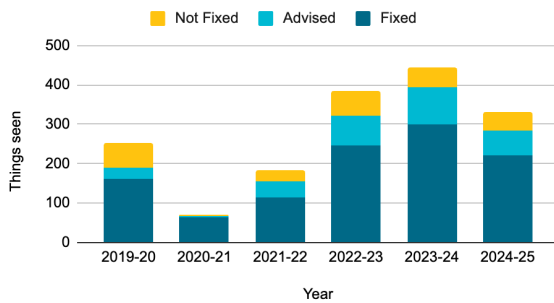


Repair café

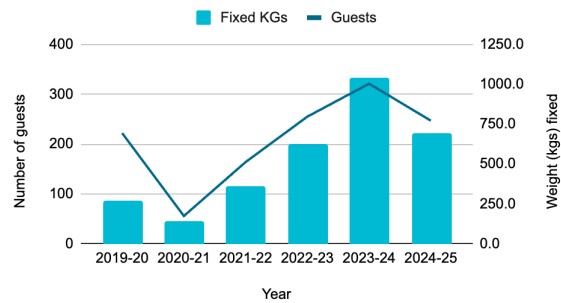
Our repair cafés have remained busy and popular this year, although we saw a dip in the numbers as the team at Marston are now all set up to run their repair café solo (which sounds like it’s going really well!), and we had a few smaller months whilst we made changes to our booking system.

We were pleased to have our first Oxford-College-based repair café, teaming up with Wolfson College to help students maintain their bikes and clothes and fix broken electricals.

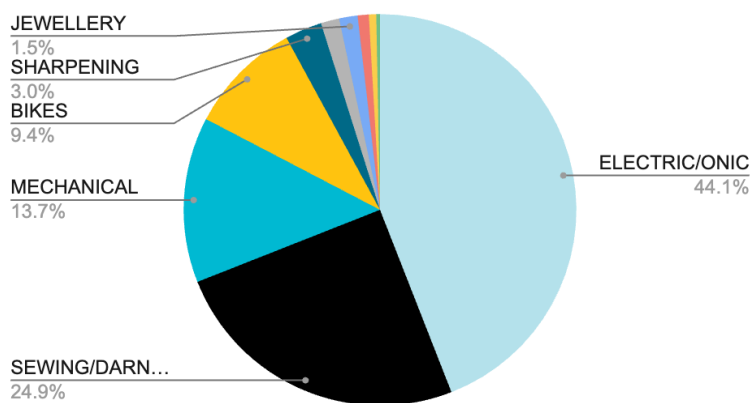
Success rate fixing



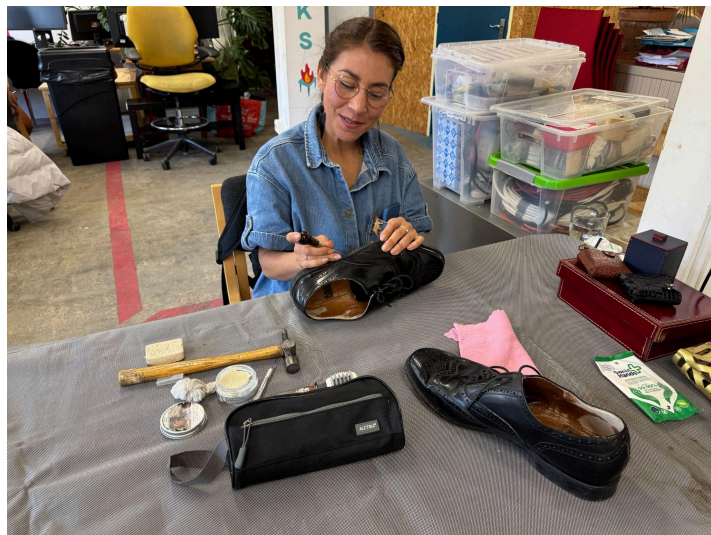
Guests visiting and KGs fixed



Categories of Things repaired



It’s always exciting to see more repair cafés opening up locally and we support wherever we can as part of CAG Oxfordshire’s [Circular Economy Collaborate Group](#). Green Appleton came to see a repair café in action in July as they got set up. Sustainable Didcot joined our jeans and jumpers workshop in September with tips for repairing these types of clothes at their repair café.



A wonderful community spirit. Delighted to have come down today.

I will remember to descale my coffee machine! Thank you Peter and team.

I understand better how my Henry Hoover works.

Fantastic outcome thanks to Rob! Great knowledge of electrical circuits; much learned.

It was very interesting to learn about the old vintage electrical systems and how we now have safer systems, watching how to change over plugs and fuses. A very fun experience

I watched an expert at work on a sewing machine!

As usual, everything fixed with a smile... and cake!

I learned a little whilst watching and this will really help us keep warm.

This is such a great community resource. The problem with my magimix was identified - I ordered a part, came back today and repairman Tony put it in, and presto - I have a functioning machine again!

Excellent service. Roberts radio repaired and saved from landfill. Vox amp looked at and further diagnosis required. [next month] thank you Peter - Amp Fixed!

I learned how to fix the brakes on my bike and take the cable out.

I learned so many new techniques and ways to improve my mending and I look forward to the next session. It was really fun to meet so many knowledgeable people to were kind and helpful.

The repair café has restored my old clockwork toy. It's wonderful! The guys were all very friendly and I was delighted that Rob took on the challenge.

It has been an incredible afternoon of chats and learnings. The volunteers are amazing and I can't wait to be back 😊

Thank you very much for your time today. We managed to fix the flat bike tyre and diagnose that the derailleur probably needs replacing. This is a great initiative and the community feeling is a joy to experience!

I learned how to unscrew the top on a Henry Hoover with the correct screwdriver and that the switch mechanism is easily replaceable. Very helpful and useful service, thank you.

Thank you so much for helping me retrieve files from a broken computer. It's an amazing place with a great bunch of people.

I learned a lot about the safety of UK electrical vs EU and why I need a third cable to ground my electrical lamp!

Friendly and knowledgeable and Tony worked a wonder to fix my bike pannier and save it from landfill. Thank you!

Unfortunately my electrical item couldn't be repaired due to the way the parts were put together by the manufacturer, but it was definitely worth coming here and having such a dedicated and knowledgeable volunteer work on it before having to put it into WEEE. Such a great institution!

Inspired by the skill sharing and place to learn and get help with household items. I got my knives sharpened and trousers altered. I learned more about sewing and small alterations and giving back to the community and helping others. It's a very refreshing space!

Rob not only fixed my toaster but also showed me how to use a multi-tool to clean it and take it apart. I've come away having saved an appliance from landfill and learned something new 😊
Thank you!

Tony worked wonders to fix the toaster - first cleaning the magnets then testing the circuitry. In the end it was a soldering job - his perseverance paid off!

Brought my bike in for a check up. Steve was very helpful! My bike is now working and he even repaired the brakes (which I didn't know weren't working). He was very knowledgeable and explained how to keep my bike at 100%. Thanks so much 😊

Tech Rescue

After last year's successful pilot sessions in Great Big Green week, we kicked off our regular monthly IT support and repair sessions in October, celebrating Get Online Week. We're thrilled to have a core team of regular volunteers who help people get "un-stuck" when their IT does odd things, keep older equipment running smoothly or help people securely pass on unwanted kit, either to Getting Oxfordshire Online if suitable, or finding a suitable home for more "vintage" or specialist equipment.

**162 devices
(174kg)**
repaired or
passed on

**18 devices
(39kg)**
advised for repair
elsewhere

**39 devices
(83kg)**
Securely
scrapped

**7 software
queries
solved**



Reuse

Tech Rescue has also been a great lesson in how we can do more with reuse. As we learn more about IT equipment as a “category”, we’re able to handle the complexities of data security and electrical safety, and we’re able to advise where things can be reused (for example, selling higher-value broken devices on eBay to those who are able to use the parts) or where there is no demand for them any more so recycling is the best route (eg it turns out nobody even picks up SCART cables on Freegle these days!).

As well as our Tech Rescue, this year we continued with informal “matching” to help find homes for things people offered to us that we couldn’t use.

148 more items passed on to partners

This included:

- TVs, monitors and printers sourced for [Makespace](#)
- A large donation of projectors, TV screens and other equipment for [SOFEA](#)
- More than 50 additional IT and electronics donations, majority of which could go to [Getting Oxfordshire Online](#), with remainder either sold or passed on via Freegle.



Skills Workshops

As well as saving stuff from the bin, skill sharing is a big part of what our volunteers do, helping people maintain and repair their own things. This year we decided to try some new approaches, with skill sharing workshops and a big splash on skills for Great Big Green Week.

28 guests at skills workshops

Our **Jeans and Jumpers** workshop in September saw 12 guests join our sewing team for a fun afternoon of fixing and learning.



Photos credit [Wilson-Cook Photography](#)

I learned how to patch very old jeans and that even old jeans have possibility to extend their life.

I patched a woollen Jumper that had gone in the elbows, using a similar coloured felted wool fabric and a blanket stitch in a contrasting colour. Thank you to Irene for the wood, pins and advice!

I learned how to darn! The woollen jumper is over 30 years old and I managed to darn over 2 holes 😊. BIG thank you!

I patched my favourite running glove with a mix of patching, darning and basic stitches. Very effective! Thank you 😊

I've enjoyed learning to sew for the first time then patched my first pair of trousers! Thank you so much!

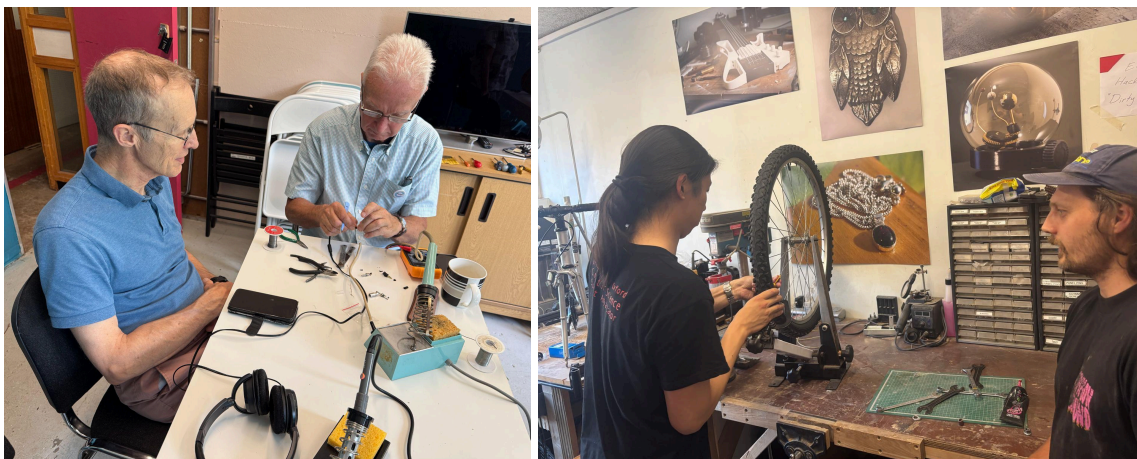
I learned so many new techniques and ways to improve my mending and I look forward to the next session. It was really fun to meet so many knowledgeable people who were kind and helpful.

Skills at Great Big Green Week: with thanks to our volunteer Vanessa, we had a go at our first comms campaign built around a focus on sustainable skills for this week. We trialled more skill sharing workshops, with thanks to Lu from [Oxford Furniture Makers](#), Piotr from [EOF hackerspace](#) and Tony and Peter, electrical repairers from our Repair Café. Over the week, we ran sessions on:

- Woodworking tool sharpening with Lu
- Bike maintenance basics with Piotr
- Introduction to Electrical Repair, with learning slots at our Repair Café with Peter and Tony.

Our sessions sold out, with 5 guests for the sharpening workshop, 7 for the bike repair and 4 for our electrical repair basics. We had positive feedback at all the sessions, with the sharpening workshop the clearest “learning” one. The bikes and electrical sessions helped guests learn skills and get their stuff fixed, operating like extensions to our repair café.

One valuable takeaway from the week was to make sure we continue to remind guests at all our events that you’re welcome to come to learn, whether you have something to fix or not!



Support for CAG workshops: as well as running our own workshops, we collaborated with CAG Oxfordshire for a successful sharpening workshop in January at Makespace, helping them manage the day and supporting on health & safety so they could provide this training event. This was, again, well-received and a model we’ll help them run again next year.

Partnerships and networks

- [Waste Innovation Station \(WISH\)](#) - into our second year with the WISH network, we're valuing learning from the work of the other partners, seeing how our work keeping "stuff" in use fits in alongside food, nature and community in building the circular economy. The Cherwell Collective team have helped us with impact tracking and you can see some case studies from our fantastic Impact Recording volunteers.
- [Community Action Groups \(CAG\) Oxfordshire](#) - the CAG team continue to support us, particularly with funding towards our Great Big Green Week activity, coordinating with other community action groups across the county, and supporting us in getting Tech Rescue underway, with a focus on Windows 10 reaching the end of support in 2025. It's also great to join their quarterly Circular Economy Collaborate Group where we can catch up with other local Community Action Groups and think about ways to drive our missions together.
- [UK Libraries of Things Network](#) - it's exciting to see the informal network of Libraries of Things, Tool Libraries and Sharing Sheds across the UK continuing to develop, with a thriving WhatsApp community and different projects sharing what they're up to, top tips, lessons learned and guidance for new starters.
- [Global Repair Café Network](#) - we don't engage as regularly with this international group, but it was fun to send off some beautiful bunting flags from Abingdon Repair Café and Sustainable Didcot to be included in the Repair Cafés 15th birthday celebration.



Spreading the Word

Events

Thank you to all the volunteers who got out and about to meet people and spread the word about what we do, making use of some of the more fun things you can hire from the Library of Things.

More than **800 conversations** with our community

Two [Begbroke Science Wonder Garden Parties](#) fell into this year (July 2024 and June 2025); both the smoothie bike and badge making were popular with kids and families and it was great to team up with Kate from the [county council's public health team](#) to explain the uses of the [air quality monitor](#) they have provided for us to hire out.



For Great Big Green Week 2025, we started the week making badges at [Oxford Climate Collective's THRIVE Oxford event](#), and finished with a new idea thanks to volunteer Maryline, offering crepe and waffle making at [WISH's Great Big Green Week Finale](#), hosted by [Oxford City Farm](#).



Online

Our new comms team have been trying different approaches to reach more people and drive engagement online. Kanchana put together a great digital marketing strategy which got us thinking about clearer goals and focuses for our content. We've been taking first steps with video, getting more active with our [YouTube channel](#) and experimenting with more reels (check out [James's top ten](#) on our instagram!). Thank you to all those who produced content, wrote blogs and newsletter material for us this year; we're looking fresher and brighter than ever with more to explore!

Digital Marketing Plan : CORE GOALS



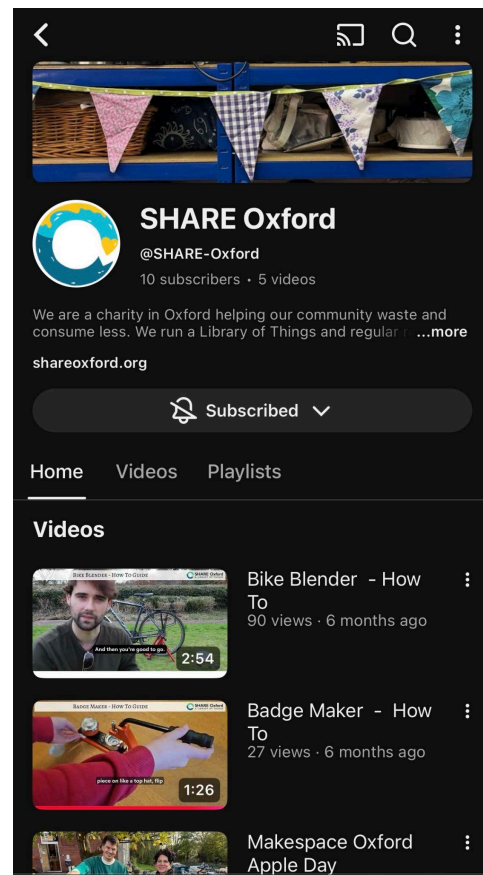
Brand Identity
Establish a recognizable voice, look, and message across platforms.



Brand Awareness
Reach more locals and engage current followers consistently.

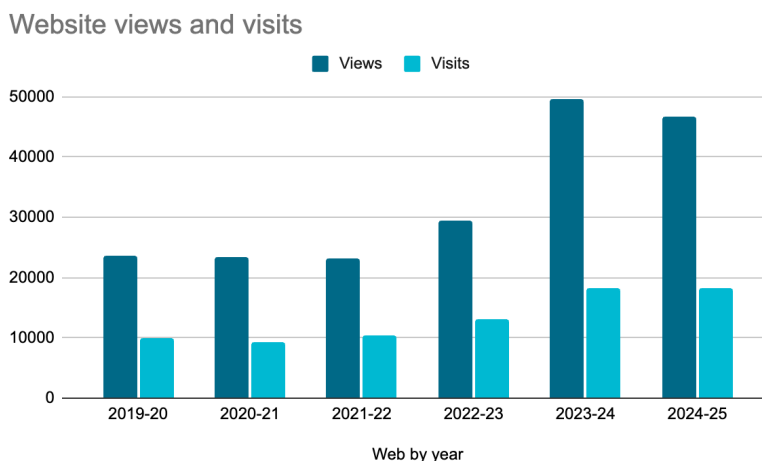


Lead Generation
Encourage sign-ups, donations, borrowing, and repair event bookings.



Numbers-wise, after the step-up last year when we integrated the library catalogue into our shareoxford.org site, we've not seen traffic grow, so this remains a focus to introduce new people to SHARE as we know we still depend a lot on word of mouth.

We are pleased to hear increasingly from Library of Things customers that they found us on Google searching for key items from our range. We're also working to make our content "AI friendly" so we show up to those who prefer to ask a GPT where they can hire a pressure washer or get their toaster repaired.



We're also not seeing significant growth in social media followers or engagement metrics, so we'll continue our focus on using all channels to reach more people across the city and beyond.

	1 July 2024	30 June 2025	Increase
Newsletter subscribers	1700	1752	3%
Instagram followers	1502	1572	5%
Facebook page likes	2407	2438	1%
Followers on X	769	675	-12%

Financial Review

Financial position

See below a summary of our revenue and costs and our end of year bank balances. Check out our [entry on the Charity Commission website](#) for full accounts of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) that we converted to in November 2022.

	2023-4	2024-5
Hiring fees & memberships	15,073	19,925
Donations (repair café + other)	2,229	1,527
Secondhand sales	4,379	5,689
Services & Events	651	1,097
Restricted grant income	23,377	22,483
Unrestricted grants	1,600	500
Interest & gift aid	831	457
TOTAL REVENUE	48,140	51,678
Consumables & maintenance	1,454	1,177
Buying Things with donated funds	1,610	1,272
Delivery	569	741
Rent	5,110	5,777
Promotion	438	16
Admin	3,998	4,190
Staff	29,644	30,734
TOTAL COST	42,823	43,907
SURPLUS / LOSS	5,317	7,771
END OF YEAR BANK BALANCE	19,407	27,818
Other assets	0	321
Liabilities	2,019	2,979
Restricted funds	3,004	4,332
Core funds	14,384	20,828

Reserve funding levels

Our Reserves Policy sets a minimum target for our core funds:

- Our “reserve” level is of 3-months operating cost + a £2k buffer for handling emergencies.
- We also set a “code red” level of 1-months operating cost + £1k shutdown costs, a level at which the board has agreed the charity would immediately be wound up, to avoid harming any creditors.

We completed this year with £20k of core funding in our bank, above our reserve level of £11k.

Principal sources of funding

We’re very grateful to everyone who’s provided funding this year. As well as our trading income from the Library and donations including at repair cafes, we received the following significant grants and restricted donations:

	<p>National Lottery Community Fund - Climate Action Fund Round: £7.7k of a £42k five-year grant to support the Cherwell Collective’s WISH project.</p>
	<p>Network for Social Change: £6.8k to support development of our Library of Things</p>
	<p>The Grocer’s Charity: £5k of funding to support a year’s worth of repair cafés.</p>
	<p>Oxford City Council via Summertown & St Margaret’s Neighbourhood Forum: £3.6k of CIL funding to refurbish our library of things with new shelves and buy new safety equipment.</p>
	<p>Oxford County Council via CAG Oxfordshire: £1.1k for our Great Big Green week skills workshops and campaign and “end of 10” Tech Rescue support.</p>

Risk statement

The board reviews our charity risk register every quarter and this has helped prioritise our work in the year, ensuring secure operations and excellence in quality of service and compliance.

We are confident in the future of the charity, with focus on these key risks:

- Financial sustainability: we have robust budgeting and forecasting in place and are focused on growing our trading income and maintaining enough grant income to secure our future.
- Key personnel: as a very small team, we are working to cross-train and work to documented processes to ensure we are not overly reliant on any one person.

Structure, Governance and Management

SHARE Oxford is a “Foundation” Charitable Incorporated Organisation, governed by a board of Trustees. Our constitution is in the [standard “foundation” model](#), with details on duties and selection of Trustees. Please [contact us](#) if you would like to see the constitution or any of our governing policies.

Reference and Administrative Details

Charity name: SHARE Oxford

Registered charity number: 1201082

Charity’s principal address: Makespace Oxford, 1 Aristotle Lane, Oxford OX2 6TP

Names of Trustees who manage the charity:


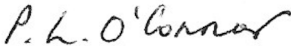
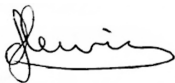

- Allan Smith (chair)
- Phillipa O’Connor
- Christopher Lewins
- Christopher Morris

Name of Chief Executive: Ben Tuppen (Project Coordinator)

Declarations

The Trustees declare they have approved the Trustee’s report above

Signed on behalf of the charity’s Trustees:

Signature	Full Name	Position
	Allan Smith	Chair
	Philippa O’Connor	
	Christopher Lewins	
	Christopher Morris	

Date 30 January 2026

Case studies

We're very grateful to Jane, Evaluation lead at Cherwell Collective, our impact evaluation volunteers Isobel and Indira, and everyone who was happy to be interviewed to pull together these case studies.

This year's case studies have focused on our repair cafés, and helped us understand better how our community can deliver much more than just the resource benefits of fixed stuff. Themes come through such as:

- Empowerment achieved through repair and skill-sharing
- Community, connection and belonging, both for volunteers and guests
- The change of mindset that taking action on climate can bring
- Learning, adapting and innovating together
- The power of repair to restore purpose for people too

Our interviewees also provided useful reminders of how we can do more, from extending the infrastructure for and awareness of repair services, to building the culture of repair and reuse in our city and beyond.

We found these very motivating, reminding us why we do what we do and inspiring us to go further. Thank you to all involved and we hope you enjoy reading them too!

Danielle's Story

Danielle has been volunteering her sewing skills at SHARE Oxford's Repair Cafe for 6 months. It's already had a big impact on her sense of community in Oxford and has made her even more conscious of the need to take action against clothing waste.



“Sewing on a button has never felt like a big thing to do. But when you meet people who say I actually don't know how to do that, I would have just thrown it away, it makes you realize how much is being wasted because people don't have those skills.”

Danielle moved to Oxford four years ago, but it's only since she has started volunteering at the Repair Café earlier this year that she has started to feel part of the Oxford community. “I've got a lot of friends who live outside of Oxford, my family live outside of Oxford, and I actually don't work in Oxford either,” so volunteering has been a welcome opportunity to meet a diverse range of people from the area.

When Danielle was looking for a volunteering role, the Repair Café “seemed like a good match, because I really like sewing and thought it's a skill I could share with people. I've always liked being able to repair things.” In addition to sharing her own skills, Danielle learns from the community at the Café. She enjoys getting ideas from others about ways to fix things she might not have thought about before, and values their support when a tricky job comes in: “we try and work it out together.”

Danielle is very concerned about waste. She finds it scary how we can “just buy something, maybe use it once, and it ends up in a landfill somewhere...and it just never goes away.” She's particularly worried about clothing waste, which is one reason that she makes her own clothes. “I know then that I'll definitely want them and keep them.” That's also why she likes repairing clothes. “The idea that you could give a piece of clothing a new life is really important, I think.”

Since getting involved with the Repair Café, Danielle has become even more conscious of waste and has been trying to buy more second-hand clothes and second-hand fabric for use in her projects. It has also made her more conscious of how important it is to share skills so that others waste less, too.

Danielle would value better access to waste recycling facilities and more transparency around what happens to waste after it goes in the recycling bin.



**IMPACT
STORY**



SHARE Oxford

Bob's Story

Bob enjoys putting his skills with a screwdriver to good use at SHARE Oxford's Repair Café. Although volunteering has made him more concerned about how much waste is built into our culture, the people he meets there make him feel optimistic.



“I really find it silly that things are made without thought of having a long life.”

Bob has been a volunteer at Repair Cafés in Oxford and elsewhere for many years. He enjoys the opportunity to put the skills he has gained through years of “fixing things through trial and error” to good use. “I describe myself as fixing anything that needs a screwdriver.”

As a lifelong DIY-er, Bob doesn't feel much has changed for him since starting to volunteer, although he has “become more aware of the throwaway culture that we live in now.” “I do get very frustrated that so many things are designed so that they can't be repaired, or that they're not designed with repairing in mind.”

When it comes to environmental issues more broadly, Bob feels “gloomy”: “I love the various efforts that people are making to keep things green and to rewild areas and all the rest. But the fact is, if you look overall at the direction the country and the world are going in, the natural environment is shrinking, and the urban environment, the concrete environment, is increasing. It can't go on forever, but there's no plan to achieve stability...I'm afraid that at some time there's going to be a crash. It may be in 20 years' time, and I won't be around, but I'm deeply sorry that my children or my grandchildren will experience that.”

The Repair Café has become an important source of optimism for Bob. “It's nice to find that there are people that do question aspects of the norms of society...they're all lovely people who come in here. I have a good chat with them. And that's nice. So in a way, I've become more optimistic since coming here, even though I've become more aware that there's an issue.”



**IMPACT
STORY**



SHARE Oxford

Paula's Story

Paula is keen to live as sustainably as possible. She comes to the Repair Café regularly and values the practical skills and specialist tools that she can access there, and has new awareness of how much it is possible to reuse and repair.



“They're supporting what I want to do, which is to reuse”

Paula only moved to Oxford recently, but has already visited the Repair Café twice. She first heard about the Café after borrowing a drill from Share's Library of Things to do some jobs around the house as she got settled. “On my first visit, I bought a bicycle pannier for which I had a spare part, and a wonderful gentleman removed a rivet to replace the part and saved the whole pannier. So it saved me throwing it away. And today, someone else is hemming some old jeans for me, which have become frayed but are still otherwise serviceable. So I think this is marvelous.”

Paula is keen to live as sustainably as she can. She gave up owning a car 12 years ago, and since then tries to cycle or use public transport whenever possible. Paula sees herself as fairly practical. “I'll try and fix things up and do what I can to keep things going,” but “I know what I can't do.” She values the skills and specialist tools available via the Café that help her fix things she otherwise couldn't. “I wouldn't know how and I wouldn't have the wherewithal either.”

Since she started coming to the Repair Café, Paula has thought “more about the reuse and repair track and not just recycling.” Now she keeps an eye out for things at home that need repairing. “I bought a lamp today as well, because the LED part has gone but the rest is fully functional. I thought: maybe that's something for the Repair Café!”

One of the biggest barriers to sustainable living for Paula is the difficulty of accessing specialist recycling facilities. “It's a shame that I can't access the tip on the bicycle. I have to rent a car to take things there. They don't admit pedestrians. So that's a bit of a blocker. I'm only a mile from Redbridge but I can't access it.”



IMPACT STORY



SHARE Oxford

Due to confidentiality, the name and photo of the participant have been changed.

Andy's Story

Involvement in the Repair Café allows Andy to share his practical skills and connect with a like-minded community. His story illustrates how even small actions can have positive knock-on effects, reducing waste and demand for new goods.



“We got a message saying, ‘I need two bike tires fitted. I’ll watch you do the first one, and you watch me do the second one’. And at the end of the day, the chap left, saying, ‘Great, I now know how to do my bike tires.’ And he was really chuffed”

Andy has been volunteering at the Repair Café for about 5 years. “It gives me an opportunity to exercise my skills, learn new skills as well, and generally chat to people. Particularly when you’re doing bikes. Sharpening tools can be a bit less sociable!”

Having gained a diploma in air pollution control in 1976 and after many years spent working as an environmental health officer, Andy is all too aware that “everything is interlinked...everything has consequences, consequences we don’t even realise.” He remembers how pollution from London factories contributed to acid rain in the Black Forest, for example. Nowadays, he is particularly worried about the spread of microplastics through the ecosystem and how little we still know about what this will mean for future generations.

But Andy’s story also highlights the benefits of interconnection. He learned many of his own skills from his Dad and other friends and colleagues. He values being able to pay this forward. “That’s one of the objectives here, to give people skills.” He is “full of admiration for the cooperative ethos” of SHARE Oxford. “I just love the fact they acted together and got the Repair Café going.” He appreciates the opportunity it provides “to come down and engage with a nice team of people and put something that’s really useful into action.” He also values part of an international repair cafe movement, which makes the “small contribution” made through the cafes held at SHARE Oxford feel part of something bigger.

The impact of even a single repair can be far-reaching: “if we fix a pair of shears, we’ve saved somebody going out and buying some new shears, and those shears being made, and the old ones being scrapped or going to landfill...just helping one person actually has quite a knock-on effect in terms of all the other things that get prevented: saving a trip to B&Q, saving the plastic packaging, and so on.”



**IMPACT
STORY**



SHARE Oxford

Julie's Story

Julie values the community she has found at the Repair Café, which she attends on a regular basis. She values being able to bring items to get repaired by volunteers, but also the welcoming atmosphere and meaningful conversations about the environment.



“You don't feel discarded or wasted here. You feel so welcome, and you feel part of the planet.”

Julie spent many years living abroad. She was only able to bring one suitcase of things back with her when she returned to the UK, so had to buy some new clothes in the sales. She first came to the repair café for help altering some dresses, which was “fantastic”.

Beyond this practical help, she found much-needed community at the café. “Coming back to Britain, it was all a bit of a shock. I didn't really know how things worked, and I still needed to adjust a bit...but here I just feel very relaxed. The people are so welcoming...You can just sit down, talk to people, and they talk to you, and the atmosphere is what makes it so special. I really look forward to coming here.” She also values the conversations about environmental issues that she has had at the café, which she finds “really meaningful.” “This combination of caring for the environment and caring for human beings...you get a real feeling that you're part of the planet.”

Julie has been conscious of environmental issues for some time, and is particularly concerned about packaging waste and consumerism more broadly. Since discovering the café, she is more likely to keep things that get broken and bring them for repair. Although she is highly aware of the scale of issues such as waste and water pollution, the café gives her hope. “A lot of the volunteers and users are young...I'm sure that they'd like to be doing other things, especially with the weather being nice, but they choose to come here and help reduce waste. I think that's wonderful.”



Due to confidentiality, the name and photo of the participant have been changed.

Lindsey's Story

Lindsey's story is a testament to the power of community action. SHARE Oxford's Repair Café doesn't just restore items; it restores connections, skills, and hope for a more sustainable future. Mending Mindsets is a powerful outcome for this volunteer!



"It's amazing to see what can happen when people come together. The Café isn't just about mending objects - it's about mending mindsets."

For Lindsey, a volunteer with a passion for creativity and community, "I've always been drawn to sustainability," Lindsey explains. "Whether it's buying clothes from charity shops or mending them to extend their life, I've always tried to live consciously. Joining the Repair Café felt like a natural next step."

Lindsey's journey began as a visitor with a faulty bike, but she was immediately captivated by the Café's welcoming atmosphere. The cosy mix of tea, cake, and chatter made the space feel special. "There's something incredibly inviting about this place. It's not just about the repairs; it's about being part of a community".

Over time, Lindsey has found her stride. She's developed strong bonds with other volunteers and even suggested practical improvements, like better lighting for the sewing area. "When I first started, I wasn't sure if it was my place to make suggestions. Now, I feel like a valued part of the team."

For Lindsey, the Repair Café is about personal growth as much as environmental impact. "It's therapeutic," she says. "Working with my hands, solving problems, and seeing tangible results is incredibly satisfying. Plus, knowing that even small improvements can make a big difference for someone is really rewarding."

For anyone curious about the Repair Café, Lindsey has one message: "Come along. Whether you're here to volunteer, learn, or simply enjoy the atmosphere, there's something for everyone. And who knows? You might leave inspired to see potential in things you once thought were beyond repair."

Her experiences at the Café have also reinforced her commitment to sustainability. "Seeing what volunteers can fix is eye-opening. It makes you think twice before throwing something away. The worst that can happen is that a broken item stays broken, but often, you'll find it can be saved."



IMPACT STORY

Irene's Story

For Irene, mending is not just about sustainability. It's about care, continuity, and community—values that thread through her life and ripple outward into the lives of others, one stitch at a time.



“We’re patient and we take our time. We don’t mend things quickly, we do it properly. That’s part of what makes this place special.”

For Irene, a long-time Oxford resident and retired university researcher, sewing has never just been a hobby—it’s been a way of life. “I’ve been sewing since I was five,” she shares. “I sewed for my children and now for my grandchildren. Even my son can sew.” That intergenerational skill sharing lies at the heart of Irene’s work with the Repair Café at SHARE Oxford, where she volunteers monthly to repair well-loved garments, accessories, and occasionally a Christmas train!

Drawn in by a love of community and sustainability, Irene finds deep meaning in helping others hold on to the things they cherish. “It’s nice mending something for someone if it’s something they love—a sweater that belonged to a relative, or something they’ve had for a long time,” she reflects. She believes mending should be a basic life skill and hopes more people, especially young ones, can be taught how to do simple sewing repairs.

What began as a personal routine has become a space of shared purpose. Irene speaks warmly of the friendships she’s developed through volunteering. “It’s a nice thing to do. You catch up with friends, meet interesting people, and share patience and care.”

Her contributions also reflect a deep environmental commitment. She cycles frequently, avoids unnecessary car use, and keeps clothes in circulation for decades—“I’ve got clothes I’ve knitted that are over 40 years old.” But she’s candid about the frustrations of modern living: “Packaging is a nightmare. Even spices and cheese come in layers of plastic. There’s only so much one person can do.”

Still, the Repair Café has reinforced her values and offered joyful moments. “We’ve had someone mend a musical toy train, it played music and had a waving Santa! Everyone laughed so much when it started running again.”



**IMPACT
STORY**

Bethan's Story

Bethan's story is a reminder that circular economy solutions aren't just about mending materials – they're about mending mindsets. Every fix, every conversation, every shared skill builds not only resilience in objects, but confidence and purpose in people



“Everyone on the team brings something different. That collective skillset is amazing. There was a moment someone brought in an old hat box – no one was sure what to do with it. I said, ‘I’ll give it a go.’ And I did. That’s the kind of confidence this place builds.”

When architect and East Oxford resident Bethan first stepped into the Repair Café at SHARE Oxford, it was as a visitor seeking help for a rescued sewing machine. “I came as a customer,” she recalls. “I had pulled a sewing machine out of a skip and brought it in for repair. The team got it working again – and I just thought, this is a lovely place. I could help out with sewing too.”

That moment sparked a journey not just of skill-sharing, but of confidence-building, environmental impact, and community connection. Now a regular volunteer in the sewing repairs team, Bethan brings lifelong skills nurtured by her mother and grandmother to help others extend the life of their garments and accessories. “It’s very satisfying to be able to help someone with something that feels easy for me – but actually makes a big difference to them.”

For Bethan, volunteering at the café has done more than just offer a space to sew. It’s helped rebuild her confidence and expand her awareness of what’s possible. “There’s always a moment where you need to stop and think: how do I solve this? That pause – that space to think – has helped me feel more confident in my problem-solving. And it’s shown me that the skills I have are valuable in ways I hadn’t realised.”

Through the Repair Café, Bethan has also discovered new opportunities, including involvement with other community-based sustainability projects. “I probably wouldn’t have made the connection with groups like the Remakery if it hadn’t been for this. It’s made me think more about where and how I can share these skills.”



Olivia's Story



For this long-time Oxford resident and committed environmental advocate, the Repair Café is more than a service it's part of a bigger picture of climate action and community care. A trustee of Low Carbon Oxford North and regular user of the Repair Café and Library of Things, she's been supporting the initiative since its early days.

“If we don't get this right, nothing else matters. You can't sort out healthcare or education if the planet is destroyed. This repair, reuse, circular economy is the center stage of my life now.”

Her journey began over 15 years ago when she stumbled upon the local Repair Café and Library of Things. “I've been coming here since it opened. I strongly support the circular economy,” she said, sharing how borrowing tools and learning to repair items aligned with her values.

Initially, balancing work and family made attending challenging. “When it was open just one day a week, coordinating times was difficult,” she recalled. Despite this, she persevered, drawn by the Café's warm atmosphere, tea, cake, and the camaraderie of like-minded people. “It's a very nice atmosphere. The volunteers are incredible.”

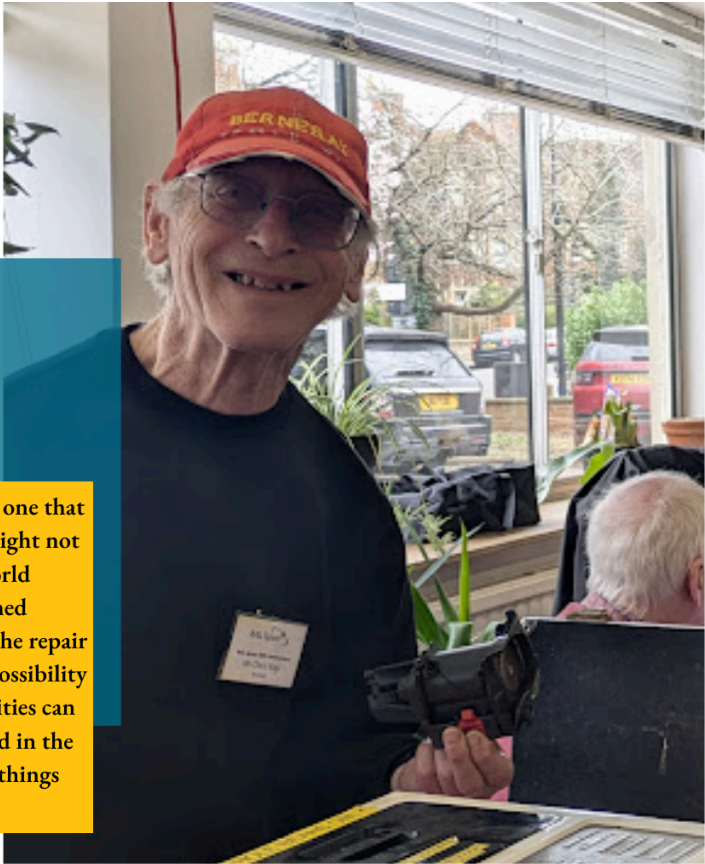
This is someone who walks the talk. She's transformed her own home for energy efficiency with insulation and an air source heat pump, eats a mostly vegan diet to lower her carbon footprint, and actively campaigns for greener policies in Oxford. Yet it's the mindset shift that the Repair Café reinforces which keeps her coming back. “It sets a process of thought going when something breaks, I stop and ask, ‘Can this be repaired?’ It's a habit now.”

From sharpening garden tools to learning more about waste materials and how to extend their lives, the Repair Café feeds into her broader environmental values. But she also sees room for evolution. “We could go further,” she suggests. “A drop-off point for clothes and materials beyond repair, maybe batteries and small electronics too, so people feel confident things will be recycled properly. That could be a game-changer.” Her story is a powerful reminder that environmental change is not about perfection, but about intention. For her and others like her, SHARE Oxford is not only a place to fix what's broken, it's a platform to nurture a more conscious, connected, and climate-aware way of living.



**IMPACT
STORY**

Due to confidentiality, the name and photo of the participant have been changed.



Chris's Story

Chris embodies a quiet revolution; one that suggests our throwaway culture might not be inevitable after all. In a world increasingly defined by planned obsolescence and digital isolation, the repair café offers something radical: the possibility that things can be fixed, communities can be built, and purpose can be found in the patient work of making broken things whole again.

Quiet Revolutionary

Armed with decades of electronics expertise and an unwavering belief in the power of repair, this 74-year-old former research technician has found his post-retirement calling in the most unlikely of places: Oxford's Repair Café.

"I've been retired 14 years. I've still got skills, so I just wanted to use my skills in constructive ways," Chris explains, his voice carrying the satisfaction of someone who has discovered purpose beyond the traditional boundaries of career.

Chris's journey into the repair movement wasn't born from ideology alone, but from frustration with the disposable nature of contemporary design.

"The most difficult thing is just taking things apart, because things these days are not designed to be repaired," he observes, echoing a sentiment that resonates with anyone who's ever stared helplessly at a sealed device.

The Challenge of Modern Fragility

"Over the years, there's been a lot of devices now that have what I call unnecessary electronics incorporated in them, simply because the manufacturers can do that and it doesn't necessarily improve the functionality, it just makes them more difficult and complicated to repair."

"I've expanded my equipment to cover a few more areas. I've been quite good at adapting things when I need to fix things. I try not to use specific parts if I can get away with some kind of adaptation."

Environmental Action

Chris, a cancer survivor at 74, travels from his home in Steventon, usually cycling the 12 miles to Oxford despite also volunteering at closer repair cafes in Abingdon and Didcot. Why make the longer journey? "The Oxford Repair Cafés are really the most interesting and successful. You see a wide variety of stuff in Oxford."

This diversity isn't just about broken appliances it's about the rich tapestry of human stories that walk through the door each Sunday. While Saturday sessions might be more convenient, Chris notes that "Sunday works very well" for him, creating a rhythm that transforms the traditional day of rest into one of active community engagement.

Chris's commitment to environmental sustainability extends far beyond the Repair Café. "I'm very concerned" about the environment, he states simply, backing up his words with actions. "I recycle as much as I can. I generate very little food waste, and I try and fix things when they fail."

This isn't performative environmentalism but a lived philosophy. Chris cycles to most of his destinations, uses public transport when possible, and has structured his life around the principle of maximum environmental responsibility. "I try to do that to a maximum," he explains, with the matter-of-fact tone of someone for whom sustainable living isn't a trend but a way of being.



Waste Innovation Station Impact Study,
Cherwell Collective, CIC © 2024

Ripple Effect of Repair

The Repair Café hasn't changed Chris's environmental commitments so much as "reinforced" them, creating a community of practice that validates and strengthens his existing values. "I'm always picking up tips from my colleagues in the repair cafes," he notes, highlighting how these spaces function as informal learning networks where knowledge flows in all directions.



The impact is both practical and philosophical. Chris's vision for systemic change includes policy solutions—he advocates for "a directive that requires things to be made to be repairable and spares have to be supplied as well" and design improvements like universal interfaces that would make repair more accessible to everyone.

Perhaps the most profound aspect of Chris's story is how it reframes retirement not as withdrawal but as redirection. "It just gives me something to do, a purpose," he says of his volunteer work, but his actions suggest something more significant: a model for how skills, experience, and time can be channeled into community benefit.

The Repair Café has become a space where technical expertise meets social connection, where environmental action becomes community building, and where the simple act of mending broken things creates bonds between people who might otherwise never meet.



What emerges from Chris's story is something unexpected—the Repair Café has become not just about fixing objects but more about fixing isolation. "It's very good social interaction," he reflects, describing how the weekly gatherings have become an antidote to the loneliness that can accompany retirement.



Beyond the workbench, Repair Café acts as a Social Prescription!