

Wilmslow Festival of Nature 2021: Post Festival Report

Summary

Festival of Nature 2021

Wilmslow's Festival of Nature was a new festival/series of events, which was planned to coincide with the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in Glasgow in November and aimed to encourage the people of Wilmslow to become more aware of what we can do to prevent climate change. All events were free to attend thanks to sponsorship.

Many hundreds of people joined in with the events. Not all were booked through the website so exact numbers are difficult to provide, but approximately 500 people booked events through the website and many more attended events that did not require booking (On Yer Bike Concert, Community Garden Open Day, Sustainable Fashion Fair etc.)

We built up a successful following on Instagram (over 400) and Facebook (358) and engaged with many local groups who helped to promote, sponsor, organise and participate in the events.

We succeeded in sharing the message of what COP26 was about and have managed to encourage people to take actions from making small personal changes to writing letters and signing petitions (see summary of feedback at the end of this document).

We worked with many local groups to put on the event and provided a range of activities to engage all ages. Our feedback shows that there is definitely an appetite for these events and we are keen to hold the Festival again in September 2022.



Aims and Objectives

With the UK government hosting the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November 2021, the following objectives were set at the start of festival planning in March 2021 by Andrew Backhouse and Professor David Hulme.

Aim:

For people across the Wilmslow area to become more aware of the issues of COP26 and what we can do to prevent climate change.

Objectives:

1. To involve a wide range of groups in running relevant events before the COP26 starts.
2. To reach a wider range of people who would not normally be interested in events or feel Climate Change is relevant to them
3. To raise awareness of Climate Change and what is happening already
4. To help people take personal action, both in their own lifestyles, and in pushing councils, businesses and the Government to take a strong lead.
5. To convince our leaders that climate action is achievable, necessary, urgent, and people of all sorts want them to act now
6. To bring the community together to have fun.

Festival of Nature – The Results

Groups involved in planning/supporting events

- Transition Wilmslow including Wilmslow Community Market Gardens and Lindow Moss Community Forum
- Climate Conscious Wilmslow
- Wilmslow Civic Trust
- Love the Lane
- The Green Room Theatre
- Fulshaw WI
- WI Climate Ambassadors
- Wilmslow In Bloom
- Cycle Wilmslow
- The Rex Cinema
- Wilmslow High School
- St Anne’s Primary School
- Wilmslow Wells for Africa
- Groundworks
- The Wilmslow Electric Bike Shop
- Experts from University of Manchester
- Cllr Lata Anderson (CEC and WTC), Cllr Julie Dawn Potts (WTC)
- URC
- Waves of Hope
- Lindow Community Primary School
- Quarry Bank Mill

Funding – we were fortunate to have support not only from our main sponsors, Wilmslow Town Council, but many other local businesses: LJ Organics, Therapy Organics, Darcy Financial Planning, Cactus Energy, Blue Tulip Garden Design, Ivy Cottage Tree Farm, Moore Secure, Ben Mulrony True Potential Wealth Management, HumbleBee, Suburban Green.

Activities planned included walks, talks, a children's art competition and a poetry competition, the On Yer Bike pedal powered live music event, guided bike rides, e-bike rides, tree and bulb plantings, a market garden open day, film showings at The Rex Cinema, a Repair café, a reading list and a Model UN COP-26 event by students at Wilmslow High School.

Walks

- Wilmslow's Natural Landscape: 5 hour walk led by Professor John Handley from the Carrs to Lindow Moss and back. 22 participants.
- Deep Time Walk: What can the rocks tell us about Lindow Moss? Walk led by Professors Christopher Jackson and Ernest Rutter (Sustainable Geology, University of Manchester). 20 participants.
- Wilmslow's Paths and Places: Jean Hill (Transition Wilmslow) and Rob Sharpe (Wilmslow Civic Trust) 20 participants
- Poetry Walk on Lindow Moss (1) led by poets Estelle Price and Anthony Jones with science input from Professors John Handley, Simon Caporn and Jonathan Lejeard. Poetry readings with David Reynolds (Green Room). 22 participants
- Poetry Walk on Lindow Moss (2) led by poets Estelle Price and Anthony Jones with science input from Professors John Handley, Simon Caporn and Jonathan Lejeard. Poetry readings with David Reynolds (Green Room). 15 participants

Bike Rides

- Wilmslow's Green Routes Bike ride: a 1hour family ride along quiet roads taking in all the schools in Wilmslow. 15 participants.
- Ride along the cycle path to Alderley Park and back. 15 participants including Cllr Suzie Akers-Smith, Cllr Lata Anderson and Cllr Iain Macfarlane.
- Meeting between the rides with Esther McVey MP, the Mayor of Cheshire East Cllr Sarah Pochin, Angela McPake, Cllr Suzie Akers-Smith, Cllr Lata Anderson and Cllr Iain Macfarlane and Chair of WTC Cllr Martin Watkins as well as members of Transition Wilmslow and Cycle Wilmslow. Discussion about safe walking and cycling and 20mph speed limits.

E-bike rides

- 15 people enjoyed taster rides on e-bikes including Cllr Akers-Smith, Cllr Craig Browne and Cllr David Jeffray. E-bikes would be a useful replacement for many local car journeys provided people felt the roads were safer. Two people have already purchased e-bikes as a result.

Children's Art Competition

- Children were asked to paint a picture to represent "What I would like Wilmslow to look like in 2030". Around 70 entries were received and judged by Brian Donohue, Chair of the Wilmslow Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Group, and artist Rachel Goffredo. Prizes were presented at Wilmslow Library and winning entries were displayed in Grove Street.

On Yer Bike Concert

- A live music event was held in Bank Square with local bands (including Wilmslow High School), and with headliner Bez from the Happy Mondays.
- The entire event was powered by bicycle – over 130 people cycled to keep the amps going.
- Around 500 people attended throughout the afternoon.
- 8 adult bikes and 2 children's bikes powered the entire concert
- More than 1000 watt hours generated and total distance pedalled would have taken us to Aberdeen.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLGX3ZVhp_0

Talks organised with Chair of Wilmslow Civic Trust Stuart Kinsey

- Wilmslow's Natural Landscape: Professor John Handley
- We are all in it together: Climate Change in Low Income Countries: Dr Admos Chimhowu, Global Development Institute, University of Manchester.
- Lost in the Bog: peat bogs past, present and future. Professor Ian Rotherham, Sheffield Hallam University
- House of 2030: Florence Collier, PassivHaus engineer and Founder, Humblebee.
- Changing your diet: the easiest way to cut your climate impact: Professor Sarah Bridle, University of York.

All talks were on Zoom, with each generating audiences of between 40 and 80 with very active audience interaction. Talks were recorded and will be on the Transition Wilmslow You Tube Channel from 1 December. While most participants were local, one regular attender was from Canada and others from elsewhere in the UK. Compared with standard invited lectures in a venue, we felt that audiences were greater, from further afield, cheaper to organise and people stayed on asking questions for longer.

Tree Planting

- Forest Garden planting: 18 people planted 18 trees
- Quarry Bank Mill planting with the National Trust: 600 trees planted

Bulb planting

The weather was not kind to this activity! We had 20 people sign up but relatively small numbers came along to plant daffodil bulbs near the Old Stables – the rain was torrential. But we are grateful to Wilmslow in Bloom for supporting the activity.

Community Market Garden Open Day

The Community Market Garden at Oakenclough hosted a Community Open Day. Fulshaw WI and Transition Wilmslow provided free home-made bread and pumpkin soup and ample cake. Activities included Wave of Hope activities for children, WI Climate Ambassador stand, home grown vegetable sales, The Bike Doctor offering free cycle checks, Tools for Self Reliance selling reconditioned tools, free sessions of mindfulness/yoga/ Qigong, as well as plenty of activities for all age groups. Approximately 150 people attended.

Reading List

Brian Tyler worked with members of TW to put together a book list of climate and environmental books. These were displayed in Wilmslow Library and in Simply Books in Bramhall and the list is on the festival website <https://www.festivalofnature.co.uk>

Repair Café

We had a very positive and exciting repair café with 50 people visiting and 53 repairs tackled. Electrical, woodwork and furniture, clock, jewellery, textile and clothing and bike repairs were offered. Although not all the repairs were able to be completed, our customers were thrilled with the repair advice they were given by our volunteer repairers. Teas, coffees and cake were served and our visitors were most generous with their donations to the work of Transition Wilmslow for the repairs and refreshments. We are grateful to Wilmslow URC for the use of their halls on the day.

Sustainable Fashion Fair

The Sustainable Fashion Fair held at The Wilmslow Guild was made-up of 12 pop-up stands/stalls from local vendors and services, to relevant businesses and brands from surrounding areas. The objective was to represent sustainable fashion in as many ways as possible and to inspire everyone to make at least one change. The offering consisted of:

secondhand fashion, vintage clothing, repair services, sewing teachers and courses, repurposing inspiration, new outdoor and fitness clothing from sustainably sourced and manufactured brands.

All stall holders selling goods have rated the events as good/very good, and services have received a significant increase in enquiries as a result of the fair. All have expressed their interest in taking part in future fairs.

Pumpkin Trail on Chapel Lane

Despite storm force winds and driving rain on Halloween 31st October the Love the Lane Pumpkin Trail went ahead and over 200 local families braved the weather to come out to support the event. 35 local volunteers had decorated their local road signs in a Halloween theme around the Chapel Lane area. After lengthy work to close part of Chapel Lane there was one Thriller style dance which was very well received. Sadly, due to the ongoing stormy conditions the event had to be abandoned an hour and a half earlier than anticipated so very little fundraising was raised for Love the Lane this year.

Model UN COP event at Wilmslow High School

With the assistance of Professor David Hulme of Manchester University, WHS held a Model COP event which proved to be very successful and gave many students a great insight into the difficulties that were to face attendees at COP 26. A link to the write up from one of the students is [here](#)

Rex Film Showings

We held screenings at the Rex of two films which we hope made those who attended think about the environment.

The response to the offer was fantastic - the shows of Lorax sold out in advance of the screening and The Day After Tomorrow was 75% sold. The attendance on the day dropped a little:

- Lorax Ballroom 39 (65%) attended
- Lorax Balcony 96 (76%) attended
- DAT Ballroom 26 (43%) attended

In order to prevent the drop in numbers in future we would consider offering kids go free with accompanying adult. However, The Rex were pleased with the numbers as these are essentially old films where they would expect occupancy to be 30-40%.



Post Event Follow Up

We have contacted everyone who took part in an event (that required booking through our website) and asked them to complete a questionnaire based on the objectives of the event and their enjoyment of the activities they participated in.

- All respondents really enjoyed the activities that they took part in (many took part in multiple events).
- Comments included:
 - Loved it all
 - The talks were very interesting and informative.
 - On Yer bike was great fun. And John Handley's family walk was so interesting and appreciated.
 - Loved the chance to learn from / be inspired by so many experts, loved the family and community emphasis too.
 - Flo's talk on homes for the future was really inspiring
 - I attended the festival event. It was brilliant and so lovely to see the range of different artists & age ranges. Personally, I thought it would have been improved if there were stalls providing drinks and food. Maybe baked potatoes with plant based toppings to promote the benefits of eating less meat. I appreciate there were local shops available though and this brought income into the town.
 - Loved the walk on Lindow with so many knowledgeable professors. It would be great to do these quarterly
 - Very high standard
- Understanding of COP 26 grew from 56% to 76.5% 'as a result of attending FON activities'.
- 82% of respondents said that they felt they had a good understanding of how they could contribute to the health of the planet as a result of FON.
- 83% of people said that they had been inspired to act (sign a petition, write to MP or a councillor) about climate change as a result of information shared via FON and its activities.
- 100% of people said that they would like to get involved/attend any future Festival of Nature events.
- Some of the comments on what participants would like to see next time and general feedback:
 - Cooking demonstrations using recipes/ingredients that have a positive impact on the environment.
 - Family events
 - Events in Handforth too
 - More things for families, to engage children
 - Ideas on how to travel more sustainably - local cycle routes, tips on using less CO2 in my daily life, how supermarkets/restaurants/cafes in my area could use more sustainable packaging, ingredients eg not using palm oil - like Chester is doing, where to buy local meat and dairy locally which is sustainably produced and not using air miles or intensive farming methods, how to grow vegetables at home successfully
 - Maybe could involve local schools more next time? Thanks to you all for organising - amazing work

- The main Bank Square Music Festival was excellent and I was proud to support this by cycling. If we intend to generate the power for future events through cycling, which I fully support, the sizing and general standard of the bikes used and the adjustability of these could be improved.
- Very informative, interesting and well organised event, I am keen to live a more sustainable lifestyle - reuse, recycle, repurpose, and to shop locally for local produce
- Well done for organising it.