



In partnership with



# Guide to Setting up a Library of Things

*Produced by Ben Tuppen, Project Coordinator at SHARE Oxford, in March 2023 on behalf of the CAG Oxfordshire Library of Things pilot expansion project. We'd like to thank Oxfordshire County Council for their support of this work. We hope this will be of use to anyone setting up a Library of Things in their area.*



## Introduction

In 2022, CAG Oxfordshire (CAG) was provided with the opportunity to facilitate a pilot project into how a Library of Things (LoT) model of reducing material waste could be expanded across Oxfordshire. SHARE Oxford (SHARE) has been a lead partner on this work sharing their knowledge and expertise of running a Library of Things since 2018. Fellow CAGs Oxford Wood Recycling (OWR), Sustainable Wantage and Bicester Green have also partnered in this project, piloting their own Library of Things around Oxfordshire.

We are incredibly excited by this expansion and the opportunity it presents for tackling the climate emergency and the cost of living crisis while forging community bonds. Based on our learnings, we've put together this document for anyone setting up a Library of Things from scratch, going through the steps considered at SHARE Oxford (in hopefully a more logical order than we sometimes considered them!) and any lessons learned.

We're keen to hear any thoughts and feedback you'd like to share. Drop us a line: [info@cagoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:info@cagoxfordshire.org.uk).

## What we'll cover

- Choosing your purpose and impact
- Choosing your customers and range
- The market, our context
- Applicable policies and regulations and insurance
- Staffing and space
- Pricing, fundraising and finances
- Computer systems and customer experience
- Outreach and marketing
- Measuring impact

## Choosing your purpose and impact

Anyone setting up a Library of Things is immediately told “what a good idea”, and the concept of sharing is intuitively good for community and environment. SHARE's founders, Alex and Maurice, made a great start with the simple principle of inviting the community to share their unwanted items under a headline mission to prevent waste. As time has gone on, we've revisited this idea, building on what we now know about running an effective Library of Things. We see these headline purposes that Libraries of Things work well for:

- Reduce consumption and, ultimately, waste (stop people buying things)

- Enable people to do activities they wouldn't do otherwise (reduce cost)
- Build a mindset in the community that sharing is better than buying (and worth the bit of extra time it takes to share something)

We find a view of the “competition” useful to validate our mission - we are happy to disrupt those people selling items that ending up sitting in cupboards, but we don't want to harm those people who already share our vision, such as hire shops:

Examples of impact we want	Examples of impact to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop people buying a cheap drill that they use once then put in a drawer</li> <li>• Offer a better option than buying a tent which goes mouldy in your loft and has to be thrown away in the following season</li> <li>• Accept donations of equipment people have sitting around unused, so it can be used by the community</li> <li>• Help people find services beyond the LoT where they can borrow rather than buy, including commercial and community services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harm Carpet Washer hire business, using grant funding to undercut their prices</li> <li>• Take business from gardeners offering “end of tenancy” garden clearance</li> <li>• People travelling miles in cars to pick up small items, negating the positive environmental gains of reusing . Similarly, if we offer old, very inefficient equipment (eg old, polluting, petrol-powered equipment)...</li> <li>• ...and of course we want to avoid limiting our impact by delivering a poor service, badly-maintained things, etc.</li> </ul>

We have had plenty of debates on our LoT purpose, and been challenged by our community. We're also conscious that other Libraries of Things come to different conclusions about their missions and how best to achieve them, so it will be great to hear where you get to and what choices you make on customers and range!

## Choosing your customers and range

We started with an entrepreneurial “aladdin's cave” of Things donated in, which proved a great way to understand what people find useful and what is easy or difficult to hire out for a great service. We continue to review our Library range to most effectively reduce consumption and save waste. Here's how we think about it:

## Customers

**The priority customer - better than buying:** our mission gives us a clear focus on finding those people who could consume (and waste) more. We aim to offer such a convenient and compelling service that they choose us instead. Some of our customers use us because they share our vision, and our objective is to be so useful that we reach those who would be relaxed about buying.

**Secondary customer - helping those less well-off:** we are aware that libraries are also a great way to offer money-saving solutions to those who couldn't afford to consume. We are conscious this is different to our mission to stop buyers buying, but are excited by the possibility of offering tiered pricing or partnering with community support charities to offer cheap or free hires to those who need it, located in the right place. We feel it's important to separate these two goals, so you have a great offering for both types of customer.

**Secondary customer - helping donors get rid of stuff:** we see a great potential for a service to help people find homes for unwanted stuff. This is separate from the Library of Things, but we have started our [Donate Things](#) channel and [Community Sharing](#) Facebook group to help with the logistics of getting unwanted items on to good causes such as community groups and charity shops.

## Products

**What makes a good library product:** with these points in mind, here's a checklist of points to help find a good product to fit our mission. We can then use this list to start thinking about what work needs doing to offer our hiring service.

- **What would the customer do if they didn't hire from us?** Are we preventing buying, enabling use or simply undercutting other hiring services?
- **Why are we more convenient or desirable?** Saving them costs or storage space? A better quality tool than they'd have bought themselves? Helping them pick the right Thing for the job or use it properly? More fun to do activities together? Able to do their project in a shared space? Glad to be doing their bit for the environment? Believe in our mission? Remember we will reach more people if we are useful than if we depend on altruism.
- **Does this work for short-term hire?** Would it be better to suggest they buy secondhand and sell when finished? Is a specialist range like musical instruments best hired one school term at a time? Could we offer different ranges on different hire plans?
- **What maintenance is needed to look after this Thing really well?** Do we have the skills?
- **Can we explain our offering clearly to customers?** So people know when they should come to us.

- **What checks are needed before hire and on return to ensure a great customer experience?** What people and space is needed?
- **What are our responsibilities to hire this safely (and for our insurance)?**
- **How will people transport this from, and back to, the Library?**
- **How consistently will this be used by the community throughout the year?**  
DIY tools are used all year round; whereas camping gear takes up your valuable space all year, but is only useful for 2-3 months/year.
- **Could there be lots of these available that we could ask to be donated?**  
Lots of people seem to have steam mops they don't want!

When we're "filtering out" products, we find they often fail on the first few questions: either they're not desirable to the customer, they're not fulfilling our mission, they confuse our overall Library offer, or they're too tricky to look after. Here are some examples:

Love it for our Library	Taking out of our range or questioning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Chisels</b> - not available for hire elsewhere, cheap to buy and dump in a cupboard, so hit the mission. Saves a customer borrowing if part of a "kit" to do a project. Easy to keep clean and sharp.</li> <li>● <b>Sanders</b> - annoyingly expensive and bulky to buy for one-off jobs, worth coming to the Library for, especially if we have different sandpaper they can buy what they need not a big roll. Easy for a PAT-testing-trained librarian to check over, and plenty of similar tools in this category. Easy to get donations from people that bought them for one-offs.</li> <li>● <b>Tents</b> - bulky to store in your loft and easy to get wrong and wind up mouldy for next year. We need space to dry them and some skilled repairers, but easy for librarians to do checks for dirt and damage. Valuable to a customer knowing we've checked it, looked after it and it'll be a good tent for your holiday.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Suitcases</b> - people either already have them or are comfortable asking their neighbours as "everyone has one". Never hired – whereas rucksacks for "occasional adventures" are a bit more popular!</li> <li>● <b>Car trailer/Tow-hook bike rack</b> - very rarely borrowed. Only of use to people with tow-hooks. Local Trailer Hire commercial offering is already compelling for the occasional holiday or moving house (£70/wk vs £500 to buy a trailer you'd have to store). If something went wrong, they could be miles from our Library. Not worth building a range and skills around this type of product, (eg tyre and tube replacement schedules, kit to test trailer lights).</li> <li>● <b>Carpet washer/Pressure washer</b> - a popular item, but gut feeling is that we're simply taking business from hire services like rug doctor. Customers are occasionally disappointed in results as some just</li> </ul>

<p>Easy for our bike couriers to deliver for a very convenient setup, especially with other camping kit like stoves, cooking gear, etc.</p>	<p>looking for a bargain vs hire shop. Not sure we want to expand this offer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Jigsaws</b> - a challenge to check that no parts are missing, better instead to give to charity shops.</li> </ul>
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## Our market and context

When considering what else a customer would do if not borrowing from us, we have a “headline view” of how we fit in with other borrowing services available:

- **Commercial hiring:** more expensive, great when you need either really high-grade kit (eg tools for building trade or marquees for events) or particular skill set (eg trailer hire from a company offering roadside recovery)
- **Commercial services:** for difficult or skilled jobs – don’t hire the Thing. Hire a professional with the right equipment to do the work (eg gardeners, handymen)
- **Library of Things:** we feel our sweet spot is the “smaller, easily-transportable Things not worth commercial hire” where manufacturing is so cheap that commercial outfits are unable to compete, and customers are happy to buy and chuck out. We can tempt them away from this approach with the benefits above. At our current scale, we are only able to offer this with grant funding and sponsorship, but, as we grow, we hope to be able to demonstrate that this can be financially sustainable too.
- **Community offerings to partner with:** for example, in our local area, Cherwell Collective’s Party Library is great for all items for kids parties, so we are not building our collection of decoration / cake baking equipment, and they are leaving the electrical Things to us. Similarly, the Oxford Sling Library offers a specific service where hygiene is of the utmost importance. As more Libraries of Things open, we will make sure we understand their focus, whether on a particular range or geography. We keep a listing of other community offerings on our [Hire & Borrow](#) page.
- **Online peer-to-peer:** ShareBee, OLIO and Fat Llama are examples offering free or paid borrowing between people, as well as local WhatsApp, Google or Facebook groups. These platforms are great for items like ladders and lawn mowers, which are abundant, easy to maintain and a challenge to transport. Similarly, people will ask their neighbours if they just need to borrow a hammer.
- **Buy second hand and sell-on:** we recommend this to people who need products for a long time, or specialist kit that very few people need.

Enthusiasts will pay for it on eBay so it's low-cost to buy secondhand and then sell-on.

## Policies, Regulations and Insurance

On top of the general requirements for running a community group / business (employment, volunteers etc), our responsibilities as hire services fall within the following:

- **Health & Safety:** overarching responsibility for ensuring that the products are safe <https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-equipment-machinery/faq-hire.htm>
- **General Product Safety Directive (GPSD):** covered in the above, we need to ensure that the products we're hiring out meet current standards for our market - usually as simple as seeing that they're CE marked or UKCA, but this can mean older donated equipment is no good to use. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-product-safety-regulations-2005>

Essentially, this is all covered by a standard risk-based approach to health and safety, but the following are hopefully useful starting points:

- Risk assessments for everything we hire out (at least at "category" level)
- Thorough "intake check" on all donated items, to ensure that they meet the current GPSR standards (eg CE marking, category-specific labelling such as EN131 standards for ladders).
- Written processes and records to confirm that all items are serviced and maintained appropriately to manufacturer guidelines.
- Process and records kept for checks between hires and when hiring out (even for simple visual checks).
- Examples of safety checks for each category of item include:
  - Hygiene / sanitising for sensitive items such as PPE / goggles
  - PAT testing for electricals (generally mandated by your insurance)
  - Food hygiene procedures and checks for everything handling food (staff training in Food Hygiene may be a relevant control measure if you do a lot of this)
  - Guards and safety mechanisms for cutting equipment
  - Appropriate enhanced hygiene measures for childrens' equipment (not something we offer at SHARE)
  - Cleaning of all sleeping bags or clothing between uses
  - Appropriate checks for bikes / trailers which could be used on roads
- Manufacturer's instructions for safe use provided with every hire. We do this, where possible, by including them on our online item listing.

- Appropriate packaging for borrowers to be able to transport the equipment safely.
- Training records for all staff and volunteers as defined by your risk assessments.

SHARE Oxford is currently insured by Wessex Insurance who have a partnership with the repair café movement and have added our Library of Things service to our “Community Men’s Sheds” policy.

We understand that no insurers offer blanket insurance for items when they’re leant out, and you will need to decide whether your terms and conditions explicitly make the borrower fully liable should they break a high-value item. We are looking into “car hire style” insurance where a customer could choose to take out a one-off insurance policy for their hire if, say, they’re hiring a £600 thermal imaging camera.

You will need to consider the Terms and Conditions of your Library of Things service. Our MyTurn platform includes the facility for every user to click to accept the Terms of Use before they are able to hire from us. Our Terms are [on our website](#) if you wanted to see what we’ve included. We found it useful to see the different details and agreements that different Libraries have included based on their operating model. And of course, seek appropriate advice to ensure you have the right cover for your service.

## Staffing and space

Here are the jobs that need doing day-in-day-out on the library:

### Staffing

- Particularly whilst we continue to develop our processes, we feel it’s essential to have a paid, trained staff member on-site for every shift. We have one Library Manager who works 12 hours/week with the current two-day/week shift structure. Our Project Coordinator covers when the Library Manager is on holiday.
- We have two regular volunteers who provide support, are fully trained on the library processes, able to help prepare items, load into the online system, and more. Having at least two people on-site makes a big difference for handling customers whilst checking items, or moving heavy items.
- The Project Coordinator leads on continuing to refine processes, safety procedures, risk assessments etc, as well as business development, marketing, and partnerships.



## Running a shift

- We are open 12-6 on Thursdays and 10-1 on Saturdays. Both days see similar numbers of people, and we are fundraising to open on Mondays, to offer a “half week” routine where people can either hire for the week or the weekend.
- Staff start 90 mins before we open on Thursday and 30 mins early on Saturday, doing checks for everything pre-booked to go out that day. We’re currently seeing six to eight people a day.
- We get one to two walk-ins a week too, and we ask them to wait 15 mins whilst we run any necessary safety checks on their hired items.
- Items must always have a simple, recorded check on the way out. We are looking at whether this can be sped up, for example by recording PAT tests and more thorough cleaning checks on intake, so just simple visual checks are required on check out.
- On the longer shift on Thursdays, the team also spends more time on general maintenance, working through items which are blocked as “in maintenance” in the system, and continuing to review the catalogue, add new Things and dispose of those which aren’t being hired out.
- We currently have four hours of volunteer support time on a Thursday and three hours on a Saturday, preparing and checking items, stock-checking and cataloguing, etc. This is constrained by the space on our site!

## Customer service - phone & email

- We get two to three people a week who call and discuss how the LoT process works before coming in, and we receive various email enquiries. We’re trialling website improvements to reduce the number of questions (eg if people can’t find the inventory listing).
- We also offer a bike delivery service through [Velocity Couriers](#), which needs booking 48 hours in advance and payment sorting, so they can arrange couriers to come in during opening hours. See more detail in Delivery section below.
- In general, our Library Manager spends 2 hours or so on customer emails throughout the week and the Project Coordinator handles the partnership enquiries, events, etc.

## Product setup and catalogue maintenance

- We get regular (weekly) offers of donations, so the librarians decide which to accept, and maintain our donations request page:  
<https://shareoxford.org/donate/>

- At point of intake, they carry out and record initial checks, making sure the product meets current regulations, includes necessary instructions, thorough first PAT test and inspection.
- The volunteers review our online item descriptions and add useful tips and links to YouTube instruction videos to help make sure our service is as useful as possible.

### **Maintenance, spares and end of life**

- **Regular maintenance:** we have a few simple preventative maintenance schedules. Petrol equipment is prepared at the start and end of the season, for example, and gardening equipment cleaned down or sharpened.
- **Unplanned maintenance:** the sorts of examples we've had in this category are if a product is returned damaged or a fault is spotted in a check eg a Gazebo frame damaged in use, wet n dry hoover needing stripping down and deep clean as part of wear and tear, scarifier failed having got "gunged up" with grass. In peak season over summer, we find two to three items fail in this way.
- **Ordering spares and consumables:** such as replacement blades for hacksaws, sandpaper for sanders. We have a spares planning spreadsheet tracking what spare goes with what item and what stock of spares to keep. Where possible, items are offered for hire with the relevant consumables so customers can get the job done.
- **End of life:** if either a product has failed or we find nobody is hiring it, we remove it from the system and either sell, freecycle, donate to a charity shop or scrap it. We add to the requests for donations page if we want a replacement! Note that the same regulations apply to selling second hand as do hiring, so we can only sell compliant items for money, others must be donated or destroyed.

### **Storage and working space**

- We have an office, approx 6x8m, and a shed, about 4x6m. The different spaces we need to think about are:
  - Storage appropriate to particular range types - food, tools, toys, large equipment, tents, gardening, fuels, etc.
  - Working space - desk space for each volunteer, check-out and check-in space, equipment waiting for maintenance, maintenance and testing areas, cleaning and drying areas (eg for food kit or tents/gazebos)
- One could think about "impact per square metre" on storage, just like "impact per £" on funding - a nice way to think about whether we're storing Things that we shouldn't be (spoiler alert - we probably are).

- All our storage is on-site at our office in north Oxford. Having chosen to employ key staff, we think this is important as we'd lose time transporting items. Split storage areas in different parts of the city could be something to consider if we have very reliable volunteers happy to do the transporting.

### **Item delivery**

- We trialled a volunteer-run bike delivery offer, but found that we were unable to provide the reliability needed in order to offer a meaningful service. To achieve this, we've partnered with Velocity Zero-Carbon Couriers (<https://www.velocitycc.co.uk/>) who offer us a very competitive rate allowing us to charge £6 each way to the customer for small items.
- Velocity are happy to store some items overnight (going out and coming back in) which is great for flexibility on days we're not open.
- Customers choose delivery on about 5-10% of our orders.
- The admin to coordinate this is surprisingly time-consuming - we insist payment methods are loaded into the system before we accept a booking to avoid late payments, and we get occasional failed deliveries where customers aren't in.
- Deliveries are also a test of the handover/check-in/out process - having a clear kit list of exactly what the courier is expecting to pickup, and checks when items return to the library, are extra important with the extra third party involved.
- We don't offer delivery on messy garden kit like petrol equipment, as our couriers handle food (as part of their overall service). Big ladders are also not workable. The system isn't yet able to confirm "deliverable" or costs so the process is quite manual.

### **Customer experience and quality**

- The majority of our customers love what we do and are hugely supportive, often saying they'll tell their friends, and indeed word of mouth is a major source of promotion for us.
- We do sadly sometimes disappoint customers, and here are some pointers to get set up in the right way:
  - Track your very positive and negative feedback to get a clear view of when the experience does or doesn't go right.
  - Make sure you have enough time for in-house maintenance, so tools are cleaned, sharpened and checked to avoid surprises and spot Things that are wearing out.
  - Give items a trial run on intake and make sure you're happy they do the job really well. We're looking for "good enough to hire out" not just "good enough to use at home" and often pass Things on with this in mind.

- Some pointers when picking items:
  - Sticking with modern kit that meets current standards will also avoid low-quality
  - Beware that “fun” stuff is often tat. Not all candy floss makers are built the same!
  - Bigger items like pressure washers or carpet cleaners - are these “decent home” quality or actually hire-service spec? People will often expect more than the product is able to deliver.
- Make sure you’re clear with customers what standard to expect from an item. Many tools are obvious, but with Things like carpet cleaners or pressure washers, it’s worth clarifying if you have a “decent quality domestic” one rather than a “commercial hire grade” product.

## Pricing, fundraising, finances

There is an obvious tension between the cost of running a good quality and safe service, and keeping the pricing as low and accessible as possible. These are some ideas that we’re exploring and you may wish to incorporate in your pricing model:

- You could set a “base price” to cover all operating costs of the library, and offer tiers:
  - a “no questions asked discount” for those who can’t afford full price. This could be funded by partner charities; or
  - Set a “pay a bit more” rate or ask if people want to add a donation.
- Once we can open on a third day in the week, our current 7-day hire price could become a half-week hire price, a significant impact on our finances with very little impact on our customers.
- With most items donated, we consider “product cost” to be made up of storage costs and costs of checking and maintenance. For example, a high-value, compact, power tool, needing little maintenance yields a much higher margin than a bulky gazebo that needs storage, cleaning and drying space, and has to be unpacked for intake checks.
- We continue to iterate our pricing as we work through which parts of our range are central to our mission. Should pressure washers be commercially-priced money-raisers thereby allowing very cheap hire of chisels?

**Fundraising:** we have a sales growth plan which we hope will see us financially sustainable in the next year. However, at current scale, we depend on donations and grant funding.

Current funding comes from:

- Hiring fees - currently covering about 30% of our costs
- Library supporter membership - options for customers to pay £5-10/month as supporters and receive discounts. This is not widely taken up. Even though more than 50% of customers are “returning”, we don’t have many who come back regularly enough.
- Repair café donations
- Grant funding

**Charity legal structure:** We have recently converted to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which we hope will open up new sources of grant funding and attract donors with Gift Aid.

## Computer systems

We use the MyTurn lending ecommerce software, which we are happy with. It does a great job of tracking reservations with simple check-outs and check-ins and strong admin and maintenance management tools. We feel the customer journey could be simpler, particularly where people start browsing before logging in then have to start again. We’re aware of these options:

- **MyTurn:** <https://myturn.com/> - SHARE’S platform and also Edinburgh Tool library <https://edinburghtoolibrary.org.uk/>
- **Lend Engine:** <https://www.lend-engine.com/> - used by Hull’s [Library of stuff](#) and [Bath’s library of things](#) if you want to check it out. All three of the groups participating in this pilot also went with Lend Engine due to ethos (they state their profits are redirected toward minimising climate change), pricing and the fact that the site is customisable.
- **ShareBee:** <https://sharebee.co.uk/> - a simpler tool designed for peer-to-peer lending, offering a super-quick way to get going with almost no setup

Here are some headlines you might want to think about:

- **Inventory categories** - streamlined categories help when you’re browsing. There’s no need to include 10 extension leads under “entertaining”, but make sure they’re easy to search for if you’re planning a party.
- **Item descriptions** - we’re working to show description, dimensions, online instructions, kit listings of what you’ll be picking up (for librarian and user to check) and notes on what to do (eg how to clean) before bringing back. It is worth designing the description with your check in and check out processes in mind.
- **Photography** - a photo of the actual Thing, rather than stock photos, avoids confusion and makes it easier for librarians to find the items! Consider adding

a ruler / scale where people might not understand the size (eg wood clamps all look the same).

- **Emails and instructions** - we're continuing to simplify our instructions (see <https://shareoxford.org/library/>) on the website and the reservation emails people get. Do feel free to email our system by placing reservations and adding notes to explain you're testing for your project, to see the sorts of emails we generate and think what you'd want to say. Just email us at [libraryofthings@shareoxford.org](mailto:libraryofthings@shareoxford.org) to let us know!
- **Payment system** - MyTurn uses [Stripe payments](#) so people can add their cards for payment. This runs the monthly supporter memberships and is great for delivery jobs. When people collect in person, we can also log payments on the system from our card machine or cash.
- **Finance reconciliation and reporting** - MyTurn includes full transaction download for reviewing spend, discounts etc by user and item. To reconcile against the payments in Stripe and our Square card machine, we need to use spreadsheet downloads from the payment gateways as well.
- **Website integration** - MyTurn [integrates using an iFrame](#) on our WordPress site. We've upgraded to WordPress Business edition which, as well as allowing the iFrame plugin, allows us to use Google Analytics and Google Adwords. A world I'm learning about!

## Outreach and marketing

Our key lessons on outreach have been that everything starts with:

- Clarity on our mission, and what customers we're trying to attract
- Simple collections we can tell people about with the right products to meet our customers' needs.

We are working on the following for promotions:

- **Intro materials:** we often have requests for a simple "we're SHARE Oxford, you can borrow things" materials, for example:
  - Posters to put up in community centres
  - Leaflets or cards to have on stands at eco-markets
  - Graphics and photos to include in newsletters or online materials
- **Social Media:** we find that regular posts reminding people what we have to offer helps keep us in their minds. This includes both relevant seasonal items such as apple presses at harvest time, or Things people might not know about like our telescope. We're working to build a library of photos of people using Things so we can explain our ranges. We're trialling Facebook paid advertising to reach more people and spread the word. We use "buffer" as a

tool to post to Twitter, Facebook and Instagram in one go, or Hootsuite is a good alternative that also allows you to manage comments and messages.

- **Local press:** we are working on storytelling, to give the local press something to talk about. We think community-focused anti-waste stories will be really compelling, and we've realised that we need meaningful examples rather than generic "did you know you can borrow stuff". We've not got here yet but will try asking borrowers if they're happy to be case studies.
- **Corporates:** we are exploring corporate relationships, asking if they'll advertise the service to staff and possibly support us with sponsorship too. We've seen good interest in corporate volunteering as well.
- **Google search advertising:** it's early days for us using these complicated tools, but we feel this could be a great way to reach people who want to buy stuff, and offer an alternative.
- **Partnerships:** we're interested in joining forces with organisations working in this area:
  - There are great opportunities for collaboration with Oxford's universities and students. We are on their volunteering websites, and keen to organise, for example, student end of term sharing projects.
  - We have started a channel to help people [donate things](#) to the community beyond what we need in the library. We've set up our [Community Sharing](#) Facebook group, so local charities and community groups can request items they need and the group can help source them.
  - We trialled a basic partnership with Orinoco's scrapstore, with a display and computer for people to browse inventory and hire Things, but we found flakey wifi and a fragile laptop made this too unreliable.
  - We are keen to speak to organisations such as [RAW Workshop](#) who might be interested to cross-advertise or collaborate with dropping off tools to hire when people pick up wood for projects. Similar to what Oxfordshire Wood Recycling are doing in-house!
  - Other Libraries of Things! We are excited to share learning and concepts with the other LoTs being started in Oxfordshire and beyond. We think each LoT needs to be shaped for the local community, and operationally discussions of sharing stock, for example, have always felt like they would not be effective, but promoting each other's offering, inviting our communities to collaborate etc, should be an exciting way to build more sharing.

## Measuring impact

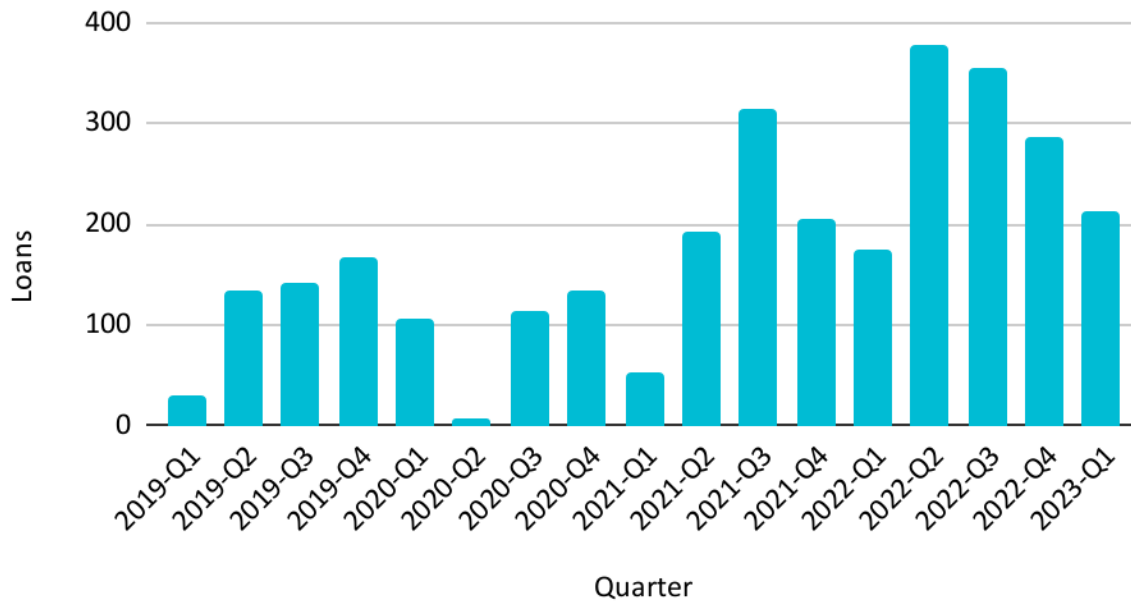
We have basic tracking in place to understand our impact, and look forward to developing this as we scale.

- **Primary and secondary benefits** - we've confirmed our primary goal is to reduce consumption and waste, but are conscious that there are community benefits to making Things available for people who wouldn't have bought them anyway. Our focus remains on the former but we feel it's worth tracking the latter as an important benefit.
- **Outputs → Impact** - we're considering this flow from what we do, to what our actions achieve. This gets harder to measure going down the list:
  - **Outputs** - the specific things that we do: number of Things hired.
  - **Outcomes** - what happened because of these outputs - eg someone didn't buy a Thing. We've realised how important it is to actually ask the customers - if the answer is they would have just rented one or gone to a repair shop, we haven't had the impact we think. And if the answer is that they wouldn't have been able to do their project, we see the community benefit rather than the climate one.
  - **Impact** - once we start recording the outcomes, we can aggregate the information to show the impact we're having at a higher level. We will explore this with case studies.
- **Data recording** - we're recording the activity outputs (MyTurn records numbers of Things hired), and are building simple spreadsheets to record the outcome questions and answers when people drop Things back at the Library. MyTurn has a field where you can record the weight and embodied carbon of Things and we feel that combining "outcome recording" and these hard measures could be a route to a meaningful measure of how much resource consumption or waste we're preventing.

To give a feel for how we're doing, here are our quarterly hiring stats. We're aiming to grow 50% year-on-year in 2021-22 (our charity accounting year is November to October), and we see building awareness as our biggest opportunity.



## Quarterly hires since 2019 (excl internal)



## Project Partners



Oxfordshire County Council has been supporting CAGs for 20 years, organisationally and financially, and they form a cornerstone of the county’s climate strategy – for both cutting carbon emissions and for increasing community climate resilience. In 2023, the council nearly doubled its funding, committing nearly £550,000 over three years to reflect the growing network, increased activity and the increase in costs to deliver the service.



[CAG Oxfordshire](#) facilitates a network of over 100 community action groups working across Oxfordshire to make it a safer, fairer, greener, more sustainable place to live, work and visit. Together, we’re building an Oxfordshire with resilient and empowered communities, so that people and planet can thrive within ecological limits. Started in 2001, the network is the largest of its kind in the UK. Our [member groups](#) work in their local communities organising events and projects to take action on issues including waste, transport, food, energy, biodiversity and social justice.



[Sustainable Wantage](#) is a community action group focused on activities that protect and enhance our natural environment and strengthen our local community. We are run by volunteers interested in actions that have a positive impact and increase our resourcefulness and resilience as a community. We're setting up a 'Library of Things' with the aim to: reduce consumption and waste; enable people to save money and do things they might not otherwise do; help to build a mindset in our community that sharing things is an excellent option. 'Things' in our library include a pressure washer, sewing machine, deep fat fryer, children's party kit and even a bat detector! You can take a look at the full range we have on offer [here](#).



[SHARE Oxford](#) is a community action group aiming 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 pressure washers, sewing machines or gazebos - and repair those which would otherwise be thrown away. Along with similar groups across the county and the wider 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. We started our Library of Things and Repair Cafés in 2019 and are looking forward to partnering with a growing community of sharers and repairers across Oxfordshire!



[Oxford Wood Recycling](#) (OWR) is a social enterprise and charity offering commercial and domestic wood waste collections around Oxfordshire, saving wood from landfill by recycling and reclaiming wood for reuse. OWR empowers the community to support their environment by purchasing reclaimed and locally sourced timber for DIY and manufactured items from the Wood Shop in Abingdon. OWR also transforms lives by supporting people excluded from working to move towards and into employment.

The aim of our Library of Things is to offer a service to our local community that provides them with a cost effective benefit of borrowing tools rather than buying new. This will reduce the need for new items to be purchased which in turn will

reduce the amount of waste. Our Library will include a range of power tools and accessories, required and requested by our community.



[Bicester Green](#) is a Centre for skills, sustainability and reuse. We operate by intercepting items that are destined for waste and use them as catalyst for learning in our workshops. We are a place for sharing skills between people of the local community and helping guide people towards their sustainable objectives.