



Annual report 2022/23

Welcome

I am absolutely delighted to welcome you to the first annual report for Down To Zero as we have had an incredible first nine months, with the organisation not wasting any time and already making an impact on its local communities.

It is fantastic to be able to support an organisation that has the passion, expertise and commitment to its mission; Down To Zero is not a talking shop, it is an action organisation that through Cynon Taf Community Housing Group and its wider partnerships with Cardiff Metropolitan University has the potential to really see positive societal change.

Down To Zero is about carbon capture, community engagement and education, helping our communities to take action against climate change in their own way. We are in the infancy stage as an organisation, but thanks to the funding received from both the Moondance Foundation, as well as the National Lottery Community Fund, we have been able to get our site in Llantrisant up and running, with Mountain Ash soon to follow. It means that we have been able to plant fruit trees, erect buildings and welfare units, explore the possibilities that comes with beekeeping, as well as showcase our Mwyndy site to key community partners.

We have also been able to grow the team with new roles, complementing the work already being undertaken by our volunteers.

This is only the start for Down To Zero and I know that as a Board, we are excited to see what is to come over the next year and beyond. My thanks to the Board members, who volunteer their time to the organisation and to the wider Cynon Taf Community Housing Group for their support in getting Down To Zero started.



Claire

Claire Snook, Chair

Down To Zero

We think global and act local by working alongside communities to tackle climate change.

Strategic Priorities

- Invest in people, governance and systems.
- Make a positive difference to the environment.
- Support Resilient Communities.
- Partner with others to achieve shared goals.
- develop our financial sustainability.

Our values

We Are

- Strength-Based
- Respectful
- Passionate
- Lead by example
- Responsible
- Environment focused
- Innovative
- We Share knowledge



What We Have Achieved

It has been a busy year for Down To Zero, with the organisation created in August 2022 to support local communities to tackle climate change and to help Cynon Taf Community Housing Group (CTCHG) reach Net Zero by 2030. Down To Zero is a subsidiary of the Group.

In September 2022, we held our first open day where 40 people attended and helped develop our outdoor food and wellbeing offering, which was supported by Keep Wales Tidy.

We signed the lease for the Mwyndy site in October 2022 and we planted our first trees in November. In January 2023, we were awarded our funding from the Moondance foundation, which have helped fund the development of our wellbeing cabin, two polytunnels and further fruit and vegetable planting.

Throughout the last year we have had an active and committed volunteer base who have supported the organisation in its infancy. Our sincere thanks to all the volunteers who make this organisation and its vision possible.





Cardiff
Metropolitan
University

In October 2022, we welcomed Jack to the Group through partnering with Cardiff Metropolitan University. As a Carbon Reduction Associate embedded within Cynon Taf Community Housing Group, Jack has led on the carbon saving ambitions by actively developing a robust carbon baseline assessment for the Group to ensure we are at the forefront of environmental sustainability in Wales.

The partnership with Cardiff Met has been a major positive and it has supported effective knowledge transfer across the Group. This knowledge transfer is pivotal to CTCHG's net zero goals, and it is proving to be an effective change management programme that enables carbon friendly behaviour change.

The Smart Partnership and Down To Zero project plays a strong role within the groups decarbonisation programme and was a contributing factor to the successful Optimised Retrofit Programme funding. By October 2023, the Smart Partnership will have developed a strategic decarbonization and carbon sequestration strategy that will showcase Cynon Taf Community Housing Group's pathway to net zero by 2030.

Our thanks are given to the Cardiff Metropolitan University team whose expertise continues to be of such high value.

Over the past few months, we have been working with local landowners at Bryn Gobaith Farm Mountain Ash to bring 1.5 acres of agricultural land into community use. This has included developing a five-year lease on the site and partnering with a like-minded organisation to support health and wellbeing in the outdoors. We have also been working with other local community groups to bring land into community ownership to support activities and services to benefit of future generations.



We have also been working in partnership with Cwm Taf Care and Repair to develop opportunities to keep bees. The volunteers have been busy making bee boxes under the guidance of a local bee-keeper who Cwm Taf Care and Repair have supplied with in kind match funding. This has provided skill development and will lead to bee-keeping at our sites for local honey production.



We continue to embed Down To Zero as a community-centric organisation within our local communities, as well as with third sector organisations.

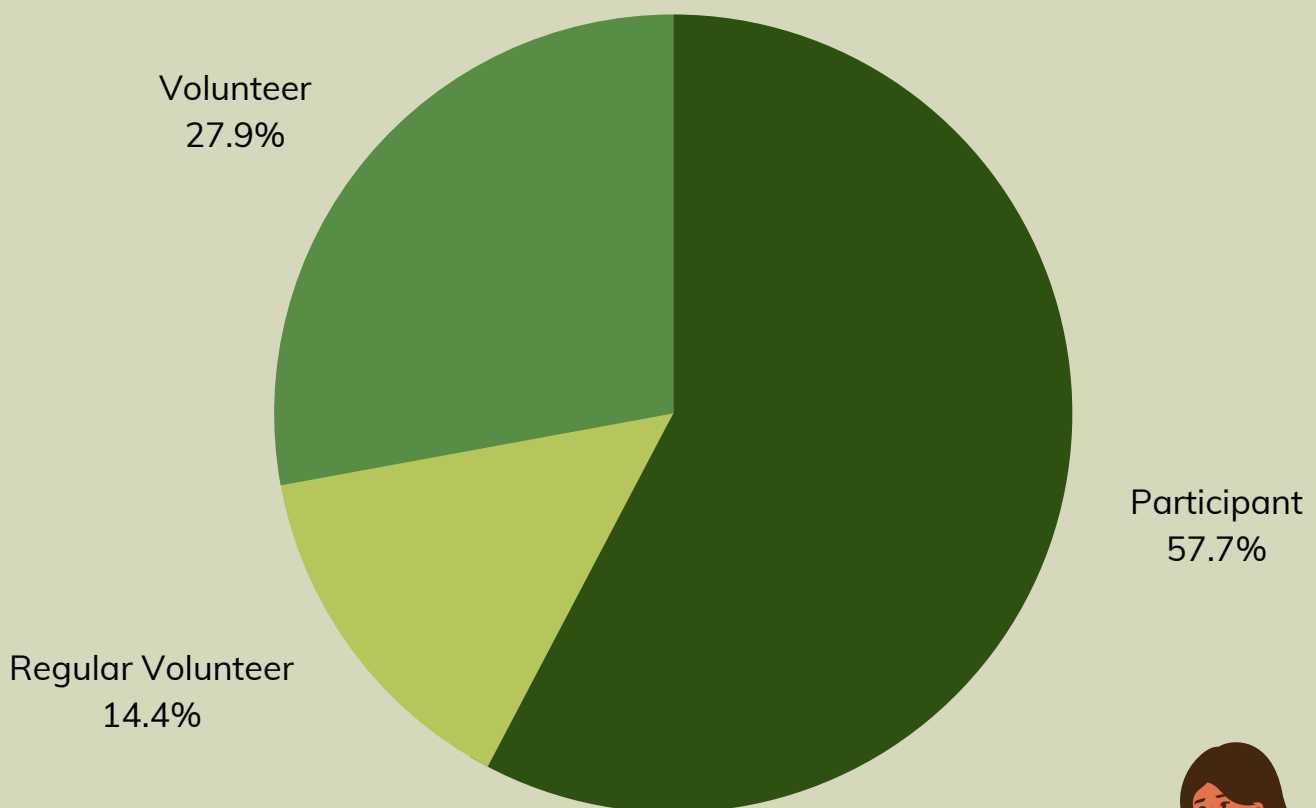
We have run numerous sessions on land for families and have actively participated and run networking events on site. Our thanks to local partners and we look forward to continuing and building upon the work and existing relations.



Participation and Volunteering

Since opening our doors, we have had **104 registered engagements** in 2022/23, This engagement can be split between the number of participants that have joined us on site, alongside the volunteers that join us for both one-off projects and those that attend the site regularly to support our work.

This year, we saw **60 participants, 44 volunteers** of which, **15** take on regular volunteering opportunities. We're looking forward to growing our volunteer and participant numbers over the next year.

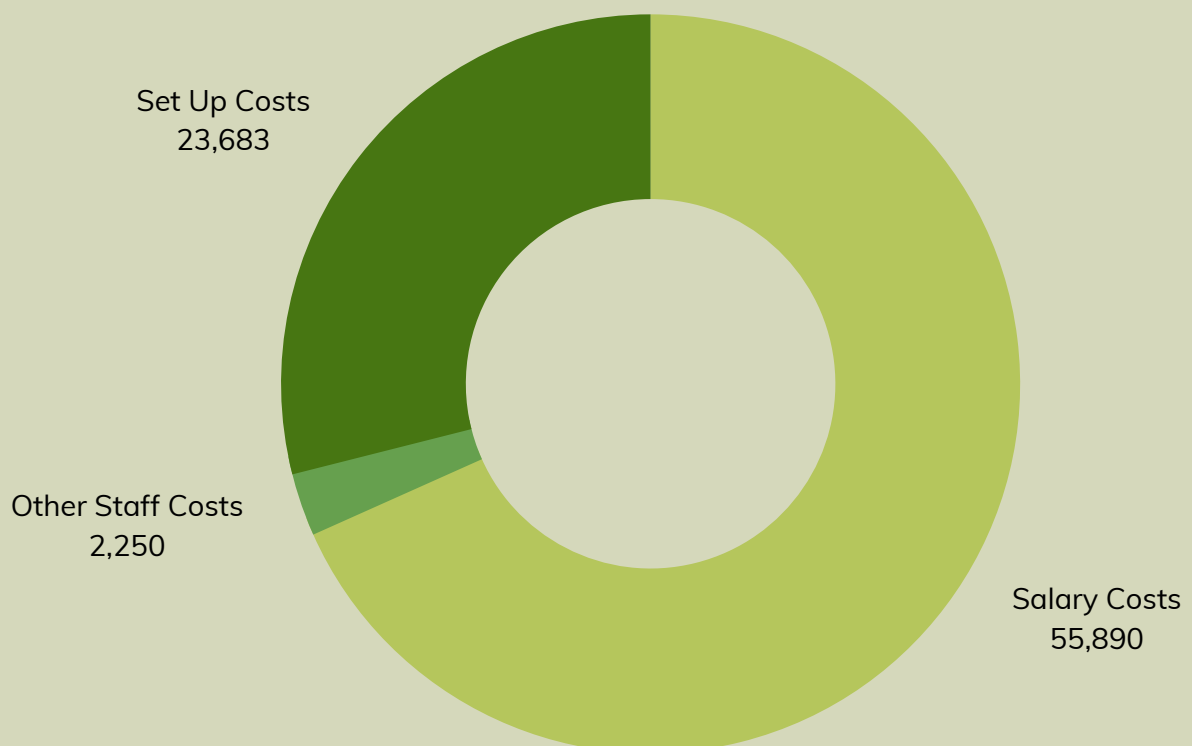


Our Finances



Investment from Cynon Taf
Community Housing Group

Expenditure



What's next for us



Our team is growing (pun intended)! Alongside a team of dedicated volunteers, we have recently recruited a green development officer. The post came as a result of cooperative work between Cynon Taf Housing Association and Down to Zero, with the organisation receiving more than £330,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund under the Welsh Government's Sustainable Steps Programme. Mike brings the knowledge and experience of developing localised food systems at Cynon Valley Organics to our mission to bring food security to our communities. This role and its outcomes will be a massive step forward in our response to tackling the cost-of-living and food crisis.

The funding enables Down to Zero to support the Group and local communities to transition to a greener and more carbon friendly future. It has been a rollercoaster of a first year and we are excited to build upon the foundations set in our first year of operating.

The next 12 months will see significant developments at our sites in Mwyndy, Llantrisant and Mountain Ash. This will include the development of wellbeing cabins, polytunnels and compost toilets.

We will be exploring trial electric vehicles for carbon friendly food transportation in line with development of our first area of business the veg box subscription service. We will be developing volunteer opportunities around gardening, bee-keeping and biochar development and will support Cynon Taf Community Housing Group with a Knowledge Transfer Partnership application for further partnership work with Cardiff Metropolitan University. This Knowledge Transfer Partnership will help deliver on the completed Decarbonisation and Sequestration strategy for a greener Rhondda Cynon Taf and our wider Wales society.

We will continue to invest in our people, governance and systems as well as actively look for funding and business opportunities to increase our financial resilience and improve our regional impact. We will continue to learn, grow and share our learning as wide as possible.

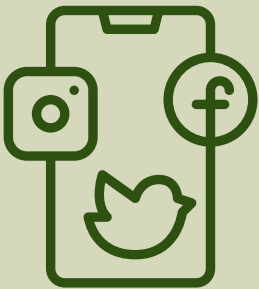


Contact us

You can get in touch with us in a number of ways...



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