

Milan Paczai, Year 3 Electrical and Electronic Engineering BEng

The Charity:

[Talking Tree](#) is a Climate Emergency Community Centre located in Staines upon Thames. It was established 2 years ago by a few local environmentalist group members, who decided they wanted to do something tangible. While Talking Tree has begun a number of projects (ranging from a community café and a community allotment to sustainability events and workshops and the saving and usage of surplus food), and has run several successful campaigns to protect and regenerate the local living environment, the engagement with it from the wider community is still lower than it would need to be. So far this has prevented Talking Tree from achieving its mission of creating a green, sustainable, community-based and net-zero Spelthorne.

The Project:

The aim of my project is exactly about removing this barrier for Talking Tree to achieve its mission by significantly improving community engagement with it from the local and the wider community. My project focused on helping to organise strategy workshops for board members, improving their communications by developing a new website, and filming a “This is Talking Tree” campaign video. I upgraded the face of their social media channels; enabling wider reach by contacting other local initiatives for collaboration, and engaging the community with more events by leveraging and helping to organise the upcoming Great Big Green Week event-series.

I gained technical skills; developing a new website from the ground-up using WordPress has given me numerous insights and a great understanding of an effective research, planning, design, development and implementation process of user interfaces and websites.

I also gained professional skills; having organised and participated in several team meetings and workshops, I improved my listening, communication, negotiation, planning and leadership skills. These have been supported by my co-organising and coordination of the Volunteers Fair at Royal Holloway University of London, the Scavenger Hunt for families and the Full Circle Fashion event.



Careers Service

www.imperial.ac.uk/careers



I was able to improve my skills to drive change in an organisation for a collectively better outcome for all stakeholders, for which I had to see the world through a systems-lens with numerous connections and feedback processes between stakeholders. These abilities helped me to leverage high impact changes in the organisational system of Talking Tree.

I am much more inclined now to help set up such a local community centre back in my home country, Hungary, and I am also planning to get involved in these overarching organisations such as the 'Kisközösségi Program' (programme for local communities) and the Forum for the Future helping to facilitate the organisation and the communication between these local establishments. I am also ever more motivated to help set up a new, more effective organisation focusing on empowering these local communities – I am hoping to develop my plans for it in the upcoming months.

To sum it up, this experience has provided me with invaluable insight into the running of such a local organisation, and has greatly improved my understanding, my hope and my motivation to work towards a world with them at its core. I can much more imagine my future working in and with them, potentially nurturing organisations both at their level, and the more overarching ones

Highlights:

- Researching about all other Climate Emergency Centres within UK has opened my eyes greatly to others' best practices and has given me hope and more courage for a better future
- Working in such an energetic team has made me want to engage with them, and other Climate Emergency Centres (including the founding of a new one!) more
- Learning to use advanced WordPress techniques proved easier than I had anticipated
- I was able to overcome my social anxieties when representing Talking Tree at a Volunteers Fair at the nearby college, Royal Holloway University of London, and engaging in fruitful conversations enabled me to recruit more than twenty-five people into the Talking Tree Youth Group I was about to establish
- I was able to co-organise and coordinate the most successful event during the Great Big Green Week 2022 campaign, that was a Scavenger Hunt aimed at families. We welcomed over fifteen families and they all found it pleasant – as well as the nine volunteers who were involved in it.

