

ACE Monmouth Annual Report

April 2023

Introduction

After signing the Partnership Agreement on 22nd April 2022, ACE Monmouth volunteers set out to deliver on the following objectives over the next 3 years:

1. To prepare an Action Plan for consideration and adoption by Monmouth Town Council (MTC), to be submitted no later than September 2022
2. To help the Council address the climate emergency declared in 2019, through guidance and change within the Council and in Monmouth
3. To organise and promote events that engage the public with the nature and climate emergencies

This is the ACE volunteers' review at the end of the first Year.

Progress to date

1. **ACTION PLAN:** The Full Council adopted in principle the ACE Action Plan on 24th October 2022.
2. **TOWN COUNCIL ACTION:** ACE Officers have worked with councillors on their side of the action plan in 5 meetings held since November 24th 2022, with 2-3 ACE representatives attending each meeting. A MTC working group has been set up and will report separately.
3. **ENGAGEMENT EVENTS AND PROJECTS:** The following summarises the actions of the ACE volunteers to date against its action plan.

Marketing

- Initial research in early 2022 showed that ACE needed to raise its profile locally if it was to draw in the community, have an impact and start to influence behaviour.
- Various items of marketing material have now been created (e.g. banner, flags, poster templates etc), with all projects and events linked by a recognisable brand identity incorporating the MTC logo.
- This has resulted in a steady trickle of people signing up to the ACE mailing list, which now stands at 223.
- In addition, the Website has been updated and relaunched, and a new public Facebook group created which is also steadily growing (219 members).
- A team of 'posters' do daily themed posts sharing tips and local information relevant to the 6 ACE themes (e.g. Energy Monday, Transport Tuesday etc), which keeps the Facebook Group active.
- This investment of time and funds is already starting to have an impact, with new mailing list sign ups (10% growth) and new Monmouth residents attending the monthly open meetings. It

is expected that this will increase over the next two years, the duration of the present Partnership Agreement.

Events in 2022/2023

- All year – Open Meetings (monthly sessions to welcome new people and review progress)
- All year – Repair Cafe monthly workshops
- April 2022 – Local environmental hustings (joint with Transition)
- Summer 2022 - ACE Action Plan workshops
- June 2022 – Beictown Event
- December 2022 - ACE Christmas Social Event and Website launch
- January 2023 – ‘About ACE Monmouth’ - presentation to Monmouth U3A
- January 2023 – ‘Strengthening Our Local Food Systems’, talk by Marianne Fisher from MCC
- February 2023 – ACE Monmouth Annual Seed Swap
- March 2023 – ‘About ACE Monmouth’ - presentation to The Explorer Scouts
- March 2023 – ‘Saving The Rainforests: Monmouth’s Response’, talk by Nichola James of Size of Wales
- All year – many of the individual projects within ACE also have their own steering group meetings on a regular basis

Events in Attendance (where an ACE stall was present)

- Wye Valley Festival – May 22
- Wye July – July 22
- Lantern Parade - Dec 22

Future Scheduled Events

- April 2023 – ‘About ACE Monmouth’ - presentation to Monmouth Rotary Club
- April 2023 – ‘Getting to Net Zero with Hydrogen’, talk by Professor Averil MacDonald
- May 2023 – ‘Energy Savings in the Home’ – the first Energy Surgery by ACE to U3A
- June 2023 – ‘Supermarket Plans to Tackle Climate Change’, talk by Martin Sutherland, Commercial and Marketing Director at Cardiff Met University’s Food Industry Centre
- June 2023 – A farm visit to Regen Ben’s Farm with Friends of the Lower Wye
- September 2023 - ACE Monmouth Festival Weekend
- Other ACE Projects / groups also have their own events planned (e.g. Repair Cafe)

ACE Projects

Energy: ‘Energy Surgeries’

- ACE has worked with town councillors, Citizen advice Bureau(CAB) and South East Wales Energy Agency to develop a model for Energy Surgeries in Monmouth, which will include a speaker event, with emphasis on providing realistic and viable advice followed by 1 to 1 appointments with people who want advice specific to them.
- First presentation will be to U3A on 16th May.
- In addition, a leaflet is being created and made available at Warm Spaces, Community Fridges, Repair Cafe, Benthgy and other relevant places.
- Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) is supporting ACE in the promotion of the leaflet and the event.

Transport: ‘Air Quality Monitoring’

- A working group including MTC representatives has been working on an air quality monitoring project for Monmouth.

- Discussions with those running similar projects elsewhere, MCC and experts in this field are being used to guide the Monmouth initiative.

Transport: 'Beictown 2022'

- This event celebrates and promotes cycling as a mode of transport, and aims to improve accessibility to safe cycling and promote it as a healthy, environmentally-conscious and enjoyable mode of transport.
- Partnering with Honeysucklewood, ACE organised a vintage bike ride in fancy dress, which attracted 50 participants (age 3-75), and prizes for the best dressed raised funds for Teenage Cancer Trust.
- In addition, 13 local businesses set up stalls or donated prizes for the 'best dressed' competition.
- 28 bicycles were checked and repaired, and data collected on the day shows that 52% of owners had either never had a service or only when their bike had become un-ridable.

Food: 'Future Farmers Group'

- Initial meetings have taken place with local farmers and a group is taking shape.
- A date for a farmers visit to a local regenerative farm is scheduled for 18th May 2023.
- Application for funding to convert one or more local farms to regenerative farming methods is being pursued, where farms are mentored by a Regen expert for a one year period.

Food: 'Deforestation Free Monmouth'

- Working with Size of Wales (SOW), this initiative aims to make Monmouth the first deforestation free town in the UK, if not the world.
- ACE and SOW will work with local businesses, organisations and schools to celebrate World Deforestation Day on June 22nd and explore the things they can do to reduce their impact on global tropical deforestation.

Food: 'Cooking Workshops'

- Working with MCC Food Partnership, this initiative aims to encourage 'cooking from scratch' and trying vegetarian meals at least once a week.

Waste: 'Repair Cafe Monmouth'

- Monthly Repair Cafe sessions resumed post Covid in March 2022 and have been held in Rockfield Park Community Centre.
- Over the period April 2022 to March 2023, a total of 176 items were brought to sessions and the majority were repaired.
- The project was 'relaunched' in November 2022 with newly designed ACE-branded marketing material (posters, flyers, banner and 'feathers') which helped increase the number of repair requests from around 10 per session to 38 in January!
- Repairs have included toasters, kettles, vacuum cleaners, but also a wide variety of other household items, like ornaments, garden equipment, clothing, bikes, computers and toys.
- Feedback from item owners (who range in age from children to senior citizens) has been very positive and complimentary, with several now repeat visitors.
- In the last 12 months, the number of volunteers has increased from a pool of approximately 10 to 26, most of whom are able to offer repair skills.
- Four Trustees are in place to provide oversight and governance.

Nature: 'Seed Swap'

- Partnering with the Heritage Seed Library, ACE hosted a seed swap event at Bridges, where some 200 people attended, and 11 'eco' stalls engaged with the community. Funds raised from this will support the ACE Festival.

Over-arching: 'ACE Monmouth Festival'

- ACE Monmouth Festival will be held on the 23rd/24th September 2023 and will focus on ACE's six themes; Waste, Nature, Buying, Energy, Transport and Food.
- Locations include Blestium Street car park (Old Cattle Market), adjoining green and The Monnow Bridge, Bridges and Shire Hall.
- The festival will include stalls, events and activities.
- An 11-strong steering group has held monthly meetings since February.
- It now has a budget, a project plan and a draft programme.
- Funding application are being made, with an initial one submitted to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for £2850.

Over-arching: 'Schools Group'

- Initially focusing on primary schools in the Monmouth catchment area that feed into the secondary schools and have a Monmouth postcode: including Kymin View, Overmonnow, Osbaston, Haberdashers Prep, Redbrook, Trellech, LLandogo, LLangatock, Little Einsteins Nursery.
- ACE is making available up to £450 to each school for project or learning resources with an environmental and sustainability element. Projects underway include bike workshops at Overmonnow and garden projects at Trellech, Little Einsteins and Redbrook.
- Further funding of between £5000 and £10,000 is being applied for from AONB.
- The group is working with MCC to provide water butts, compost bins and compost to local schools, with delivery of water butts so far to Little Einsteins Nursery and Trellech.
- MCC has also agreed to provide transport at cost to enable Monmouth schools to visit the One Planet Centre at the Llanfoist Recycling Depot.
- Work on secondary schools will start as the ACE volunteer network expands.

Over-arching: 'Climate Cafes'

- Young members of ACE have proposed starting Climate Cafes in Monmouth, which will be a monthly event for young people to discuss their concerns about climate change and put forward ideas.

Essential Support

- In September 2022, Rebecca Cunningham was employed on a part-time, temporary contract as Projects Officer to support the ACE officers.
- This has been invaluable in growing ACE and supporting all the activities above.

Treasurer's Report:

Profit and Loss Accounting Year 2022/23

	Debit	Credit
Initial Balance		7874
MTC Funding April 2022		7500
Existing Funds Carried Forward		374
add Income		7855
MTC Funding 25 October 2022		7500
Beictown Tea / Coffee / Smoothies		129
Seed Swap		181
Heritage Seeds co funding		45
less Expenses	13316	
Marketing	2247	
Beictown	2044	
Project Officer	7594	
Website	509	
Mailing	140	
Public Liability Insurance	106	
Miscellaneous	87	
Stationery	112	
Refreshments	298	
Room Hire	179	
Current Balance		2413