

Summary of the Community Climate Forum held at Mistley Village Hall on 1 October 2024

42 people attended this Community Climate Forum – a great audience – thank you. John Hall welcomed everybody and explained the update to the PACE vision which now reads:

PACE Manningtree works with local communities to increase understanding and take positive actions to address the changing climate and the loss of biodiversity – we aim to build our resilience to the impacts of climate disruption and threats to the natural world.

The aim of the Forum was to discuss the Existing PACE Projects and several new Possible Initiatives to help determine which could be the most effective in helping to deliver this PACE Vision, particularly taking into account the need to help our local community become more resilient to the changing climate and threats to nature.

Discussion on Existing PACE Projects

There were 2-minute introductions to each of the following projects.

Manningtree Earth Festival – Bonny Williams

The Food Project – Jim Sumberg

Community Solar Energy – Tom Moat

Wildlife-friendly Gardening – Caroline Hall

Water Quality of the River Stour – Bob Rowles

Plastic – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – Lucy Redman

A more Sustainable Tendring Show – John Hall

Attendees then chose to join a discussion group for one of these 7 Projects. Key Points were noted for each Project and attendees could join a WhatsApp Group, if they wish, for further discussion. A few of the key points are as follows

Manningtree Earth Festival – likely date Sunday 8 June 2025

- The aim remains to educate and inspire local people with all aspects of sustainability; however, we need more emphasis on visitors going away and taking at least one action
- Ask people to pledge to do something specific?
- The Town Centre is a good location
- The Zones in the Festival could perhaps be more in line with the PACE Projects
- Could there be communal cooking?

The Food Project

Observations

- changing climate affecting established cropping patterns;
- Hadleigh HEAT is also working on food, including planting a community orchard, preparing and eating food together. Also Fairtrade and hydroponics discussed.
- it is useful and important to take a top-level, systems view of the problem
- comments about the Co-op and what it does or doesn't sell
- there are fewer farm shops than before,
- some 'people' don't know what seasonal food is; shops don't feature seasonal food

What PACE might / could / should do

- create a directory of local food
- make a pamphlet on seasonal food
- educate people to eat less pork and chicken
- focus on food waste and how to reduce it
- focus on food packaging and how to reduce and/or change it
- promote or educate people about organic food
- get involved with community supported agriculture (CSA)

Comments on the proposed book for young adults

- need engagement with broader swath of population, not only young adults
- are books too much work? a pamphlet or series of leaflets might be better

Community Solar Energy Scheme

- Local people now understand more about the benefits of solar including financial savings and energy security and this could provide some local resilience
- The scheme has created awareness and brought people together and those that can afford it have got on with it
- The delay of investment for the Funded Option has been a problem – could there be a local investment opportunity?
- It would be good to extend roof-top solar to community and commercial buildings
- Local testimonials from those who have PV's and Batteries would be useful to encourage other local people to sign up

Wildlife-friendly Gardening

- Previous Open Gardens have been in Lawford – could there be a number of Gardens in Manningtree or Mistley?
- If Manningtree then there are locations for the hub (like the Venture Centre was used in Lawford) eg Foundry Court, Masonic Hall, Fire Station,
- A good project for interesting those people who are not already engaged
- If we do the Earth Festival in 2025, Wildlife Gardens could be open then, or we could do the Open Day in 2026.
- Examples of drought tolerant plants/gardens would be good
- More for children would be good.
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Water Quality of the River Stour.

- The project monitors the water quality of the River Stour on a monthly basis, in order to inform the Environment Agency of any potential pollution incidents and ideally, to locate their cause and press for action.
- Concentrations of dissolved oxygen, conductivity and the pH of the river are taken in addition to the invertebrate sampling method called Riverfly developed under the Anglers River Monitoring Initiative.
- So far, the data has shown the River Stour at Dedham to be in poorer health than we would expect, but there is no single obvious cause.
- Priorities for the future are to continue to sample each month, because we are building up long term data, and to include additional measurements such as nitrate and phosphate.

- It is hoped to get the results on the PACE website each month, to start using these results to press for improvements to water quality, and to add a sample site at Nayland, where there are volunteers interested and the data would be valuable.

Plastic – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

- Perhaps it should be Reduce, Reuse, Refill, before you Recycle
- We need to lobby Councils/Government/Producers to regulate which plastics can be used so that they can be recycled better
- Get local shops and Takeaways to use materials which are genuinely recyclable
- Increase the education and information to our community
- PACE to fund a Teracycle Box – about £200
- Utilise and promote the Tendring Primary Recycle Scheme TPRS

A More Sustainable Tendring Show

- This is an important and influential project because of the large numbers of people attending (up to 25,000) and the impact on the local community
- Worth repeating the Travel Prize Draw – but promote it better in advance
- Bike and E-Bike demos would be good plus free Bike Check
- Another initiative in addition to Travel
- EITHER Tackling Recycling at the Show
 - have recycling bins available, clearly labelled and monitored by volunteers to make sure people use them
 - make sure we know what can be recycled well and focus on that
 - require Vendors not to use Single-use Plastic
- OR Food
 - Displays about the PACE Food Project – perhaps involving a local food Marquee
 - Get Local Food Producers involved
 - Presentation on Seasonal Foods

Possible New PACE Initiatives

There was a 2-minute introduction to 3 ideas

1. A Community Greenspace – introduced by Chris Bowden

The aim would be to buy or lease land (minimum 10 acres) in a prominent location which is easy access for local people and where PACE could improve the habitats for biodiversity and provide opportunities for education and leisure. This would of course require substantial investment, serious fundraising and a lot of volunteer support. However, there are big grants available and, for the right location, this could be a great asset for the community and for the understanding of environmental issues.

This was a popular discussion group with a lot of enthusiasm.

Discussion focussed on:

- Where are the possible locations in Manningtree/Mistley/Lawford?
- What activities could be embraced?
- Where will the funds come from – grants/subsidies/crowd funding etc?

2. A Community Environment Hub – introduced by Bekki Bibko

The aim would be to acquire a building in or near the town centre, fit this out to become a focus for environmental information/advice/skill sharing. Probably need to have a paid manager supported by a rota of volunteers, open as many days a week as possible. Again, this would require serious fundraising.

This was also a popular discussion group with a lot of ideas.

Discussion focussed around:

- Where is there an existing suitable building in Manningtree?
- What would be in the Hub, possible events, courses, skills, workshops; perhaps a café or library; opportunities to engage different parts of the community; the advantages of having a visible and permanent presence?
- Where would the funds come from?

3. A Local Environment Advice Service – introduced by Jonathan Wise

The aim would be to assemble a list of experts and advisors who are willing to give advice to local people with interest in a sustainable improvement – such as insulation; solar panels; food growing; electric vehicles etc – these people need information and trust.

Discussion focussed on the fact that sustainable initiatives can be complex and confusing particularly if there are competing salespersons and marketing. This puts people off actually making changes. The creation of small ‘learning groups’ interested in particular topics - e.g. installing solar, buying an EV, growing food, informed by experts and enthusiasts happy to share their experience / advice could work well in providing encouragement and support. In most cases we envisage a volunteer giving advice based on their personal experience.

As a result of these introductions a fourth possible initiative arose:-

4. The All-in-One Greenspace/Hub/Advice Project

The aim would be to recognise the importance of all three elements – perhaps start with a bit of land in a good location – add a Shed before a Centre building – a focus for giving good information and advice.

Discussion focussed on starting with a good location which did not exclude other options – then develop a range of skills – growing food/regenerative agriculture/nature recovery: Men’s Shed/Climate Café/Eco-building ideas: Embrace other local organisations so it is a community wide project.

After short feedback from each group, attendees were given the opportunity to vote in a straw poll as to which they thought the best:

- A Community Hub 24 Votes
- All-in-One 20 Votes
- A Community Greenspace 19 Votes
- A Local Environment Advice Service 7 Votes

The Possible New Initiatives will be progressed through the PACE Board of Trustees (next meeting 14 November)

The Existing PACE Projects are already agreed by the PACE Trustees, and these will be progressed through a WhatsApp Group or Email Group for each project. Let PACE know if you would like to join.

Thanks to the presenters and to everybody coming and their lively enthusiastic discussion.

The next PACE Supporters Meeting will be on Tuesday 5 November starting at 7.30pm (venue to be decided) where the main topic will be **the PACE Food Project**. Everyone is welcome.