

Summary of PACE Meeting 5 December

22 PACE volunteers met in The Crown for a celebration of a great year. There are about 20 PACE projects running and we heard snapshots from a few of them:-

Community solar energy Scheme: Tom Moat

Over 240 “Expressions of Interest” for solar panels and batteries from Manningtree Mistley Lawford and Ardleigh – plus others from the sister project in Colne Valley. Surveys now being done, installations in the New Year and “Pay as you go Funded Option” from Spring 2024.

Local Food Network: Jim Sumberg.

The team have a plan for listing the “local food “assets” in the wider Manningtree area and finding ways to encourage local residents to recognise and support these.

Community Allotment: Sarah Smith and Shelly Lippert.

A good supply of veg from the allotment this year, thanks to the work of the volunteers who meet on Sunday mornings to sow, nurture and harvest. More than that, we discuss lots of environmental (and other) issues, get good physical exercise and leave feeling good.

Water Quality of the River Stour. Caroline Hall.

The team took samples of freshwater animals and water chemistry monthly through the year. Our Annual Report shows the water quality is not good – particularly in Dedham. The Environment Agency were asked to follow up, and they responded. University of Essex joined us to measure levels of bacteria in our monthly samples.

Schools: Sarah Harrison.

The Education volunteers have visited 4 local Primary Schools to run Environment Field Trips which complement the School curriculum: Tree surveys; Insect Diversity; Small Mammal Trapping and Pond Dipping. Great response from the children and teachers.

Plastic Free Manningtree, Mistley & Lawford: Lucy Redman.

Following on from the great work done by Bekki and the team, we are aiming to keep up this initiative going forward, but we do need more volunteer support please.

Environment Bookshelf in Manningtree Library: Caroline Hall.

The first 20 environment books were recommended by PACE – the Library bought them and launched the Bookshelf at The Earth Festival. Most of the books are out on loan so the Library wants more recommendations – see the PACE website.

Manningtree Earth Festival: Jonathan Wise.

This was the biggest initiative for PACE this last year with over 3,000 visitors to the Festival on Sunday 11 June 2023 – thanks to over 100 volunteers who made this possible. Lots of nice feedback from visitors, stall holders and local shops. We have decided to run The Earth Festival every other year – so not in 2024, but will be back in 2025.

40 Ways Poster and Booklet: John Hall.

7,500 copies were distributed door to door in the Manningtree area. Brantham wanted their own version which The Coast and Heaths AONB funded, and Jan Armstrong organised the volunteers to deliver. Dedham, Hadleigh and Colchester want to print their own versions.

Helping the Street Keepers: Dominic Watts.

This team, organised by Sharon Barker under the Manningtree Town Council, has met every Monday (weather permitting) to look after the streets of Manningtree so that the Council does not need to use glyphosate weed killer in the town. New Street Keepers are welcome.

Looking Forward: John Hall

PACE is now a registered charity which brings new opportunities, particularly for funds: it also brings responsibilities which our 12 Trustees will ensure we meet. Volunteer time and energy is our main resource, but funds are available to support volunteers – we need to keep focus on the best initiatives. PACE has become well known, not just in Manningtree but throughout Essex and Suffolk – indeed PACE has been nominated for the Kings Award for Voluntary Service.

Seasons Greetings and all the best for 2024.

Next PACE Supporters Meeting is on Tuesday 6 February 2024 in The Crown (no meeting in January).