

Projects Update LAG 22nd July 2021

Theme 1

Tintern Abbey Trail (Wye Valley AONB) – the project is nearing completion, they need to test and refine. The main delay now is that the AONB are waiting on a response from Cadw regarding permission to locate beacons in the abbey grounds. Cadw are a partner in the project so they are hoping sense will prevail soon, as it has been going on for 18 months! There is a slight hiccup now as the developer working on the project has been hospitalised for a few weeks, but the AONB are hoping it will be all finished within the next six weeks.

Theme 2

T2017 Gilwern Schools educational programme – The project has resumed since the return to schools. Covid meant we couldn't and we have re-engaged with a view to restart in September with the project and redefined the finance. This to extend the project in light of the missing year. Due to Covid the only option for the workshops was on line and outside. The children have benefited from both – external tutoring coming from Cherry Taylor (local gardener and horticulturist/trainer.

To date 240 children have participated in the project and will expand in September, with 120 being added to the scheme as they move through the programme. The Environmental Ambassador will lead on some aspects such as recycling and use of water.

To resume in September, the project will refocus on initial programme of growing and composting. Covid depending. we will re-engage with producers with a view to capturing seasonal harvest.

Finance – there is 6k left in the budget and there is some discussion about defining a timetable for growing - this will offer a format for future years. Other options will be taken in new school year.

T2018 Food Sector development and data analysis – The funding for the core project of data analysis was sourced through Wales Govt –240k.

Funding originally allocated has now been returned to the RDP "Pot". 1k remains in support of activity around the project (via RDP).

We are now 10 months into the project and the data analysis programme now includes key data via the developed dashboard, developing partners (NRW, OSS and Others) and continues to gain momentum.

We hold key information on farms, yield, land type and options for growing based on current land nutrition etc. There is some work being completed on nutrition and our understanding of provenance and purchasing via wholesalers. The key focus to engage with the supply chain and direct growers to business for use of local produce. Whilst we continue to engage in the procurement and development of practical support for the supply chain, further development of the dashboard and increase relevant data input is being requested from other sources. The programme is held in high esteem and Welsh Government are looking at options to extend the

programme of work across Wales and develop other partnerships with a view to gaining access and use of other data sources.

T2019 Developing resource for farm enterprise – Brecon Beacons & Monmouthshire

The project moves forward with a series of online meetings attracting Food and Farming activists. There are a series of fortnightly meetings on the key subject with a view to developing an action plan. The direct engagement with Farmers has been particularly useful and the workshops (on line meetings) has drawn a wide number of participants.

Land access is proving the most difficult to engage in the process. For ease I have attached the latest update report from Our Food.

T2020 - Nutritional Project Abergavenny Community Trust

For various reasons the project start was delayed and the funding had to be revised to ensure continuity with the later start date and agree options for delivery.

The original submission for delivery in the north (totalling £25,000 actual costs) was based on a 52-week project starting 5/1/21 ending 7/1/22, and provided 9 weeks of set-up and 43 weeks of food delivery, with evaluation included at 2-3 weeks in the food delivery period. The revised submission is based on a 47-week project, ending 17/06/22 (to allow time to complete claims by the end of June) with 7 weeks of set-up and 40 weeks of delivery.

The costs have been amended and the intended funding for the South of the County has been revised - ACT will continue to deliver the project for the North and it is intended to request agreement from the LAG to re address 10k of the project for a bespoke piece of work to address an and identified need with support for the food banks. See below.

Request for change to LAG - Community Fridges in Monmouthshire and their benefits

Over the last year, Monmouthshire has seen the development of several community fridges in locations across the county. The community fridge model is very flexible and the precise provision varies considerably between different projects, but at its most-simple a community fridge is a space where surplus food can be shared, including donations from local food businesses, producers, households and gardens. Community fridges are run by local volunteers and can be accessed by anybody; there is no charge for the food that is shared and no requirements around demonstrating need. The main purpose is for usable, surplus food to be eaten rather than going to waste.

Community fridges have demonstrated their very significant potential in keeping biodegradable waste out of landfill and hence in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Over the three months January - March 2021, Monmouth community fridge alone gave out on average 1765 kg of food each month and served on

average of 640 customers each month; in December 2020 (with the huge collections over Christmas), Monmouth gave out 3855 kg of food and served 803 customers.

The first community fridge in Monmouthshire opened in Monmouth in September 2020 and this fridge continues to be open to the public seven days a week. Since then further fridges have opened in Abergavenny and Caldicot, the Chepstow community fridge project has recruited a volunteer committee and is hoping to open soon. Further fridges are being explored in the communities of Gilwern and Magor.

In addition to the environmental benefits, community fridges are also playing an increasingly important social role. In Monmouth the fridge is located at the Bridges Community Centre where there are plans developing to link the fridge provision with the (currently being refurbished) kitchen, to help develop and share skills in the community to make the most of what would otherwise become waste food; there are similar plans developing for the fridge in Chepstow.

Furthermore, a growing body of evidence is emerging that community fridges play a significant role in supporting households on low incomes or who may have experienced an unexpected economic shock to their household finances. Provisional data from across Monmouthshire appears to demonstrate that where community fridges are in operation, reliance upon foodbanks decreases with households supported to avoid food crisis.

Development needs

Because Monmouth Fridge was the first to become operational, in many ways it has also been the first to encounter some of the more significant challenges of community fridge provision - although others are now beginning to meet similar obstacles. In particular, because of the essential food hygiene requirements, the policy, procedure and training element of the provision is very labour-intensive in comparison with other similar community projects. This places a significant time-burden upon a relatively small core of the wider volunteer network (because of the subject expertise that is required to carry out this part of the volunteer role safely and in compliance with all regulations). It effectively places a 'cap' on the ability of community fridges to develop their offer and to realise their full potential.

It is intended to re-purpose the £10k that had originally been allocated within this project for procurement, to commission a bespoke piece of work in support of all the Community Fridges across the county. The outputs of this piece would be:-

- Development of common policies and procedures for all fridges in Monmouthshire who wish to benefit from a common approach – including time-saving initiatives for the scheduling of volunteer rotas
- Development (and delivery, where appropriate) of a package of training for community fridge volunteers
- Development of opportunities for further integration into Monmouthshire's circular economy activities, further enhancing the environmental and community benefits of the individual fridge projects
- Support for the rapid development of new fridge projects, where communities show a desire to develop one

- Secure further funding, where a need is identified, to shore up the long term viability of Monmouthshire's community fridges
- Work in partnership with local volunteers to develop the above and effectively free-up their time to do what they do best – that is, to engage with their local communities.

Theme 3

T3007 Be. Community Programme – although RDP payments towards the project coordinator have ceased, some payments are still being made towards the training sessions. These sessions are continuing to be delivered online and have proved highly popular as evidenced by responses to post training questionnaires. More sessions are either booked or planned to be held within the next couple of months. An online training portal will be available once the programme has finished although efforts are being made to source further funding to extend the programme. Officers feel that this project has positively affected the relationship between the authority and communities, perhaps exacerbated by its role during the pandemic. Plans are in place to undertake an independent evaluation.

Farming Community Network Exhibition Unit Project – the Exhibition Unit is refurbished and the livery wrapping has been applied. It is now at Monmouthshire Livestock Market and is scheduled to be open on the 21st July. An NHS nurse will be doing 3 surveys at the market to establish what the NHS requirement is and Bob and Shirley, volunteers from Farmers Community Network, are presently organising the rota of voluntary helpers who will be drawn from health bodies, emergency services, animal welfare groups, ICT etc.

Developing our Young People – Withdrawn. At a project sponsor meeting held on 14th April, concerns were expressed at the apparent lack of progress. Notwithstanding severe operational pressures within Children's Services, the completed project worker job description is still awaiting senior officer sign off. Due to the impending time limit imposed on projects to complete by the end of the programme, it has been agreed to set a deadline of the LAG meeting on 22nd April for the sponsor to provide a definite timeline for the appointment of a project officer. If this cannot be provided, regrettably, the project funding will have to be withdrawn.

Theme 4

Heat Networks – a draft of the final heat mapping report has been submitted by the consultants and they went through the main findings at a steering group meeting held on 8th April. Although the potential for large scale heat networks is limited, a number of small scale schemes have been identified. The final report will shortly be made available via the website once the observations from the group meeting and any other comments are taken into account.

T4 014 Halls Together – we have re-visited this project in light of restrictions starting to be eased. Louise McGuinness was asked to contact all the halls and update the database that we held from 2014 as the majority was very much out of date and asked if they would be interested in being involved with the Halls together project.

Out of those Louise was able to make contact with, about 30 were interested in hearing more about the project. We held an inception meeting at the start of June, with 18 of the halls being represented.

A project steering group has been formed with representatives from 4 halls and RDP staff. We approached GAVO to help run the project, they are at capacity, but have offered to help were ever they can.

A clear proposal for the Steering Committee is being developed and will include options for development and the way forward. The proposal is to develop a rationale /brief for the steering group and look at options for encouraging more halls to be involved.

The next steering group meeting, on the 15th July includes an invitation to prospective consultants, to discuss their approached and next steps. The deadline for the proposal is Friday 23rd of July with work to commence around the middle of August if appointed.

We approached GAVO to help run the project, however they are at capacity, but have offered to help were ever they can. A basic brief has been put together and we have approached a consultant to make a formal proposal which will be present to the steering group.

Theme 5

T5006 Llanover Cluster – This project has mainly been on hold due to Covid restrictions. However, future training needs have been identified and once we have a date for the halls to re-open we can start organising further training.

T5010 IoT and Independent Living- The 5 devices have now been selected to trial across the 5 LA areas. 4 of the devices selected will look primarily at addressing loneliness and social isolation. 2 of the 4 devices will also include monitoring participants though sensors which monitor movement, temperature, Lux etc. The 5 device will address falls prevention with the participants having a wearable device that monitors the individual and can help identify potential health and social care risks leading to a more independent living.

The devices selected and the area they are being trailed in are as follows: Kraydel Konnect- Monmouthshire, KOMP- Newport City Council, Ethel- Torfaen, Cascade3d connect care- Blaenau Gwent, ARMED- Caerphilly.

Each of the LA partners are to trial 10 devices if possible. All of the partners are now receiving training on how to install and use the devices ready for when the service users have been selected. All the partners are now working on selecting appropriate service users to participate in the project and ensuring that they and they family are fully on board with the project. We are now working though the appropriate paper work needed such as consent forms, privacy notices and monitoring and evaluation questionnaire