

Biodiversity in Monmouth (S6 Environment Act 2016 (Wales)) **19th December 2022**

Introduction

Monmouth Town Council is committed to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in Monmouth for the benefit of its residents and tourists to the area. The Town Council has ownership of only 2 open spaces in the town- the "Town Field" and a play park. The "Town Field" is an open field of trust along the banks of the River Wye and is predominantly used for dog walkers. The field is used for the annual fireworks display, rowing club regatta and the annual raft race organised by the Rotary. The Town Council also manages the planters and flower beds that are found in Monmouth high street and around the 5 wards of Monmouth. In total there are 66 planters and 9 raised beds.

As a result of the reduced amount of outside space that the Council has management of, we rely on working with other projects to enhance and encourage the biodiversity within the town. This report will highlight the number of initiatives and partnerships that the Town Council are a part with the hope that the biodiversity in the town remains.

What we have done



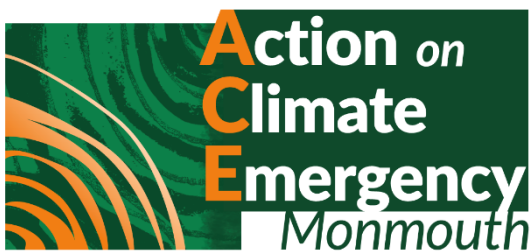
We work in partnership with Monmouthshire County Council to ensure a 'no spray' policy is practiced in our Town Field. We protect and encourage wildlife by being part of the **Nature Isn't Neat** project, which supports the re-wilding of green spaces and planting pollinator-friendly plants to encourage bees and other pollinators.

In 2020, Monmouth was named the **first Bee Town in the UK** and also awarded the **Caru Gwenyn (Bee Friendly) award**. This was a joint venture between the Town Council and community groups such as Bees for Development. The Council has continued its support of the Bee Town Status in 2021-22 through the continued planting of pollinator-friendly plants and use of peat-free compost in all the planters in and around the town. This has even been recognised by visitors to the town...



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Monmouth Town Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and set up the ACE Monmouth Working Group that continues to promote the impact of climate change on society and arrange events to encourage change in the town and to raise public awareness locally. In 2021-22 ACE Monmouth held the first **Future Festival** that raised awareness through a variety of different mediums including film, talks and workshops.



ACE Monmouth has now become a self-constituted group that will be supported by the Town Council through a Partnership Agreement which will ensure that the efforts of the group continue to thrive.

As part of the Partnership Agreement, members of the ACE group have prepared an **Action Plan** for Monmouth Town Council which has been adopted in principle. This plan gives areas for the council to focus on in their efforts to combat climate emergency and improve biodiversity. These areas include procurement, energy, transport and nature. As the Council moves into 2023, a number of mini projects and missions have been set from this action plan that will ensure continued biodiversity in the town.

Monmouth Town Council also supports the **Plastic Free Monmouth** scheme which sets out to reduce the usage of single-use plastic that is washing up in our rivers and can be found increasingly in the countryside. By contributing funds to the drinking water fountains in the town we hope to reduce plastic waste even further and there are now 3 drinking fountains in Monmouth with a 4th due to be installed imminently. With our support and funding of Plastic Free Monmouth, the community-led steering group was able to obtain Surfers Against Sewage accreditation for the town and have encouraged local businesses to reduce their use of single-use plastic and apply for Plastic Free Status. This work has continued throughout 2021-22.



The Council has also established a relationship with the **Friends of the Lower River Wye group** that are investigating the significant and damaging changes to the River Wye that has seen the demise of the biodiversity in the river. This group has been able to hold a "Wye July" event which highlighted the concerns regarding the River Wye.

We help to deliver a cleaner, greener Monmouth with the provision of **dog waste bins** and the ‘**Give Dog Fouling the Red Card**’ campaign and also support our very active **litter group** (run in partnership with the local authority and a team of dedicated community volunteers).

Our **Active Travel working group** work diligently with the Local Authority to encourage the development of suitable routes for cyclists and walkers to reduce the use of vehicles and to consider such impacts when considering local planning applications. Provision for additional cycle parking in Monmouth was secured by the Active Travel group in 2022 with a covered shelter now sited near the Blesitum Street toilet block. The Town Council and the Active Travel group have also continued to be consultees for the development of an active travel route from Kingswood Gate and Williamsfield Lane, working with Sustrans and Monmouthshire County Council.

As a Town Council we also **grant aid to local community groups for environmental projects** such as the improvement of the Rockfield Community Garden. Consideration has also been given to improving the availability of local allotments and community gardens in Monmouth. It is thought that that will not only increase the biodiversity in the area but will also provide easier access to fresh, locally grown food.

Conclusion

Monmouth Town Council will continue to work with initiatives such as Nature isn't Neat and Plastic Free Monmouth to support projects which protect and improve our local biodiversity. In addition, through the partnership with ACE Monmouth we continue to support the projects that are set to reduce the town's impact on the climate emergency which in turn will improve biodiversity. Our partnership with ACE Monmouth is in its early stages but we are confident that it will progress into successful projects that will unite the whole community to fight against the nature and climate emergencies.