



MEC NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2023



PRESS PHOTO OF OUR AWARDING OF £3000 FUNDING FROM THE COMMUNITY FUND AT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION TYNE & WEAR AND NORTHUMBERLAND, FEATURING MEC STAFF SENIOR PROJECTS & FOOD PARTNERSHIP MANAGER JOE DUNNE (FAR LEFT) ECO SHOP CO-ORDINATOR LISA HARRIS (SECOND FROM RIGHT) AND MEC DIRECTOR BRIAN SIMPSON (FAR RIGHT)

FUNDING SECURED FOR GREEN HUB ECO SHOP AND AFFORDABLE WARMTH

We recently secured two major sources of funding: The first, and the most significant, was part of £9.7 million funding made available through the Ofgem Energy Redress Scheme. We personally received over £150,000, which will help our Affordable Warmth team tackle fuel poverty and help those vulnerable to the energy crisis in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland.

The second was £3000 worth of funding from the Community Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland that will help us to support families in creating slow cooker meals and to provide a freezer for our Eco Shop in the Green Hub that will help us further reduce wastage and provide a greater variety of food for our customers!

CLIMATE ACTION MIDDLESBROUGH HITS THE HIGH NOTES

Our Climate Action Middlesbrough project continues to connect with the local area and deliver real results. Some highlights include:

- Sustainable catering for events signed off by MEC board paving way to 'Climate Action In All Policies'
- 5 vegetation management events at Bonny Grove Nature Reserve. 5 tree planting events during and after National Tree Week. Path creation and habitat management event at The Arty
- Completed 6-month programme of training and practical workshops at Larchfield Community for adults with learning disabilities with over 20 residents.
- Attendance at Teesside University's Climate Summit, engaging with 18 sixth form students. Sustainability Day at James Cook Hospital, running the smoothie bike and promoting the project, 60 people.

In terms of the environment, the project has overseen the planting of over 1000 trees across Teesside since the start of 2023 alone, with wildlife land management carried out on over 13 hectares of land.



A SUCCESSFUL EVENT HELD DURING FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT AT THE GREEN HUB BY CLIMATE ACTION MIDDLESBROUGH, WITH MEC CHAIR OF BOARD JULIA ROSTRON (LEFT) AND CLIMATE ACTION MIDDLESBROUGH PROJECT OFFICER AURIANNA NAJAH (RIGHT)

ROOTED IN NATURE REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

Rooted in Nature, our service offering help and advice to individuals and families with mental health needs in partnership with Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind, continues to hold highly successful events.

Rooted in Nature, represented at MEC by Rooted in Nature Engagement Officer Paul Robinson, has supported 141 people in Middlesbrough so far, and events like the one held at WWT Washington (pictured) and RSPB Saltholme last month enable the service users to connect with nature and each other. Doing so provides a fantastic boost to their overall wellbeing and mental health.



ROOTED IN NATURE SERVICE USERS ENJOYING A DAY AT WWT WASHINGTON. PICTURED IS MEC-BASED ROOTED IN NATURE ENGAGEMENT OFFICER PAUL ROBINSON (BACK ROW, SECOND FROM LEFT) AND MIDDLESBROUGH & STOCKTON MIND-BASED LEAH JOHNSTONE (BACK ROW, FAR RIGHT)

BAE AND FOREST SCHOOLS CONTINUE TO INSPIRE

Boro Active Explorers have been enjoying their weekly visits to deliver Forest School activities to local schools. Children at Sunnyside Academy have been practising woodworking skills and den-building in recent weeks. We've been so impressed with how the children are excited to be out even in these colder months, and getting active has been the perfect way to keep warm!

Children from Thorntree Academy have loved their Forest School sessions this term, practising tool skills to make these fantastic medals. One of our focal points has been looking after their environment and the nature that lives there, so they've also been learning about the different trees and looking for early signs of spring. This group loves a chat, and we've enjoyed listening to them share how being outside in the woodland makes them feel energetic!



PUPILS AT SUNNYSIDE ACADEMY SHOWING OFF THEIR WOODWORKING CRAFTS. STAFF PICTURED ARE FOREST SCHOOLS PRACTITIONER TABBY MICHELIN (FAR LEFT) AND FOREST SCHOOLS ASSISTANT LEWIS WHITEWOOD (BACK LEFT)

UP AND RUNNING IN THE NEW KITCHEN

Our new kitchen was recently completed! Taking pride of place within the refurbished conference room, which continues to have work undertaken on it to install new toilets, the new kitchen has seen a number of cooking sessions already take place within it, including this one pictured with Middlesbrough First.

The groups very much enjoy the hands-on cooking experience, and our Cooking Team of Les and Kim very much enjoy and appreciate the brand new kitchen that makes their jobs much easier!



THE MIDDLESBROUGH FIRST GROUP COOKING IN OUR BRAND NEW KITCHEN WITH SUSTAINABLE LIVING TRAINER KIM BAINES (FAR LEFT, EDGE OF PHOTO) AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING TRAINER LESLEY LOWE (OFF-CENTRE, IN BACKGROUND)

ACTIVE TRAVEL ACROSS TEESSIDE

Our Active Travel team continues to serve the children of Teesside with expert tutelage in pedestrian training and in Bikeability: In March, they served a number of schools across the region including Whinney Banks and Sacred Heart in Middlesbrough, Bewley in Stockton, Yarm School and Clavering and Holy Trinity in Hartlepool.

Margaret, James and Dan also attended the Bikeability Conference in Birmingham on March 2nd to help further broaden their horizons in regards to Bikeability, and to connect with other providers of the service.



THE GARDENING SERVICE RETURNS

Spring has arrived, which means MEC's Gardening Service has made a triumphant return: We have once again successfully recruited for our seasonal Garden Services team: Kenneth Hiscock, who has previously worked for our Garden Services team, and new employee John Upton. Work commenced on Monday 3rd April 2023 and will run until October 2023.

PROVIDING AFFORDABLE WARMTH TO TEESSIDE

We successfully recruited for a third member of our Affordable Warmth team. The successful applicant was one of our staff who was at risk of unemployment from our CommUNITY Actions team.

The team continues to be extremely busy supporting residents throughout the South Tees area. We have delivered over 700 fuel vouchers in the last quarter, including 306 in Redcar & Cleveland and 455 in Middlesbrough. The team also sent out 55 Warm Packs and conducted 10 home visits, and attended 19 events as well to provide information, advice and guidance around energy efficiencies and access to support.



SENIOR PROJECTS & FOOD PARTNERSHIP MANAGER JOE DUNNE, PICTURED POINTING AT THE NEW VAN, WITH (FROM RIGHT TO LEFT) JONATHAN WRIGHT (SENIOR PROJECTS MANAGER), MATTHEW ALLEN (CLIMATE ACTION MIDDLESBROUGH COORDINATOR), SANDRA HICKEY (HEALTHY COOKING ASSISTANT), CHRISTINE FEARON (AFFORDABLE WARMTH TEAM LEADER) AND ABBY FEARON (AFFORDABLE WARMTH ADVISOR)

GOING GREEN WITH OUR NEW ELECTRIC VAN

We received delivery of our second-hand electric van! It joins our electric Peugeot and ensures that all of our projects (primarily Climate Action Middlesbrough and Forest Schools) have access to at least one electric vehicle, helping to keep our overall emissions low and to keep Middlesbrough Environment City as clean and as carbon-free as possible!

NEW STARTERS

Leila Sbai - Food Partnership Co-ordinator

Ella Deacy - Community Growing Officer

Kenneth Hiscock - Gardening Services

Paul Upton - Gardening Services

Connor Champion - Moved from Community Actions to Affordable Warmth

Connor Mullen - Moved from Community Actions to Bikeability

DEPARTURES

Carolyn Hill - Sustainable Living Trainer

Kevin McGrother - Food Partnership Coordinator