



ace
Action in Caerau & Ely
Gweithredu yn Nghaerau a Threlai

Action in Caerau & Ely



SUMMER
OF SMILES
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Annual Report 2020 - 2021



THANK YOU ACE!



Our Ambitions For Our Community Through Our Own Efforts



“Our Ambitions For Our Community
Through Our Own Efforts.”

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1. Message from the Chair

No one would expect much to happen in a year when the country was in lockdown and the Our Place Dusty Forge centre was consistently closed to the public. But ACE isn't constrained by normal expectations. The pace of change accelerated in 2020-21, and it's arguably our most successful year so far.

The start of the pandemic saw an astonishing transformation of work priorities for staff and volunteers as they readjusted to home working and meeting community needs in new ways. Our charity was recognised as a critical front-line resource, and extra grants were secured for food and fuel poverty and health projects. It was a tough time for everyone, but ACE proved its worth.

Meanwhile a £300,000 refurbishment programme for the Dusty Forge was under way, transforming its dowdy run-down facilities into bright community spaces, training rooms and ground-floor offices.

That was just the start of a revolution in ACE's presence in the area. Work on the Hidden Hillfort Heritage Centre started in Caerau, creating opportunities for today's residents and links with their ancient Celtic past. The Centre with its neighbouring play area was opened by First Minister Mark Drakeford this September. In a significant step forward in November 2020, ACE bought a house next door to the Dusty. At a stroke we took a new role as a socially responsible landlord housing a local family, an investment of our reserves to safeguard the future, and a

permanent physical stake in our community.

In the autumn of 2020 our co-founder and Director John Hallett announced he would be leaving us in April. This news could have stopped us in our tracks. Yet we were able to explore the transition to new leadership calmly and systematically, including the challenging idea that senior development managers Dave Horton and Michelle Powell might take over jointly as Co-Directors. Dave and Michelle slipped seamlessly into these new roles without the usual months of disruption of a new appointment at the top. They aren't the same as John. But they are brilliant successors.

Other game-changing appointments in 2020-21 included Helen Bull in the



new and much-needed post of Volunteer Development Officer, and volunteer Dave King as trustee and Treasurer. He immediately set about a radical overhaul of our financial monitoring and reporting systems to bring them into line with our rising budgets and highly complex funding arrangements.

Sadly, the financial year ended with the devastating blow of the death at the age of just 42 of Caroline Barr, ACE Health Development Officer and Pantry Manager, who was widely seen as the heart and soul of ACE's community volunteering. The pain of her loss was, and still is, palpable. She has been remembered at ACE's tenth anniversary celebration in July 2021, in artwork created with staff and volunteers by Artist Nic

Parsons, and in the naming of Dusty's new 'Café Barr'.

The 2021-22 financial year started with ACE in its most comfortable advance funding position to date. Full sustainability is not on the cards and there will probably be rocky years ahead. But grants and project opportunities are still rolling in, including new ideas for social care, and a planned "Library of Things" equipment lending initiative in partnership with Benthyg Cymru.

The team has since then pulled off a remarkable achievement with the post-lockdown 'Summer of Smiles' activities for local young people and their families. Its success is a sound basis for future development of our youth services. ACE is even preparing to take a ground-

breaking new role in the new GRACE project, helping local men under the supervision of the Probation Service to build supportive links in their neighbourhoods and to make their own contributions to community life.

We've achieved so much together despite the disruptions of a global pandemic. We are very aware of the significant challenges facing our community over the coming winter and beyond. We will do everything we can to ensure that all of our brilliant community's resources are mobilised to support people through these times.

Mel Witherden, ACE Chair, September 2021.



2. About ACE - our vision and values

Our Vision:

To create 'vibrant, equal and resilient communities for all, where people find fulfilment in themselves, each other, and the place where they live'.

We work with communities to achieve lasting positive change for an equal and just Cardiff by:

- Mobilising local people behind a shared vision
- Co-producing projects and services that make use of assets and meet needs
- Driving positive social change, making our communities fairer and more inclusive
- Securing income and maximising community assets for sustainability and community resilience
- Working closely with private, public and third sector organisations to secure the benefits of their resources for our communities

Our Theory of Change:

Need:

We tackle poverty, disadvantage and related complex needs on all fronts using a fully integrated approach.

Solutions:

Co-produced initiatives build confidence, skills, capacity and resilience, improving mental health and promoting supportive social networks.

Outcomes:

Local people report a range of outcomes including improved wellbeing, securing employment, completing training, stronger social networks and greater aspirations.

Impact:

Local people who have developed confidence, skills and energy contribute these to collective approaches to community development

If you would like to find out more about our strategic plan for 2021-2023 please email daveh@aceplace.org



- Local people know their community best.
- Everyone has something unique to contribute.
- Everyone's contribution should be valued equally.
- Poverty should not be accepted as a fact of life.
- Social injustice should be challenged and changed.

3. 10 years of ACE!



In July 2021 we celebrated ACE's 10th birthday. What a journey it's been! From humble beginnings in a small office in Glyn Derw, through the challenges and opportunities of the Communities First programme, to the hustle and bustle of the Dusty Forge and our brand new Community Heritage Centre. Join us for a look back over 10 colourful years!

A potted history of ACE



2001

The Welsh Government's Communities First programme is launched, aimed at tackling poverty in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. It gets off to a slow start in Ely and Caerau but by 2006 there are 4 community workers led by Project Coordinator Iona Gordon. Early efforts are focused on building relationships and discussing local needs and ambitions.

2006 - 2010

A number of new projects are set up with support from the Communities First team. The Mill Park project begins running activities for children and young people and ends up regenerating the park and play area. The brilliant Unity group is established at Church Road. The



Ely Garden Villagers are supported to run their annual bonfire night displays. Conversations begin - How can we sustain this work into the future whilst putting it more firmly into local people's hands? The idea of a community based organisation begins to take root.

ACE's first board of trustees meet at the old Ely Housing Office to sign the organisation's Memorandum and Articles of Association. The organisation is registered as a Company Ltd by Guarantee and **ACE – Action in Caerau and Ely is born!**





April 2013

ACE takes on the running of Communities First in Ely, Caerau, Fairwater and Pentrebane. In practice this means CF staff hand in their notice with Cardiff Council and are re-employed by ACE. A bold move that provides ACE with its first employees and plenty of energy and enthusiasm.



March 2014

ACE employs a Development Manager, the first member of staff outside of the Communities First programme. They are tasked with building the organisation and diversifying its income so it can survive once CF finishes.

June 2014

ACE staff move into offices at the brand new Ely and Caerau Community Hub. The venue quickly becomes home to a range of CF/ACE projects including a community garden, community ambassador meetings and the installation of the famous concrete sheep!



February 2015

The Dusty Forge Youth and Community Centre is earmarked for closure by Cardiff Council. ACE decides to make a home there. Soon after, the Dusty Shed (Cardiff's first Men's Shed) is launched in the old bookies. A community garden begins to take shape, courtesy of Billy Mainprize. Parts of the building are brought back into use for a range of community-led activities and Our Place Dusty Forge gradually becomes a thriving community centre.

September 2016

An initial application is made to the Heritage Lottery Fund proposing an exciting new community regeneration project building on ACE's work with Cardiff University on the CAER Heritage Project. Plans include a community heritage centre and heritage themed playground.

March 2018

The Communities First programme is closed down after 17 years. ACE stands alone! By this time, major projects such as CAER Heritage, Working Well and work with health services are bringing in resources from other sources. ACE Training, the organisation's first social enterprise, is providing earned income to support the organisation. By this stage there are 22 members of staff and 32 volunteers.

March 2021

ACE bids a fond and grateful farewell to our first Director, John Hallett.



September 2021

The CAER Hidden Hillfort Heritage Centre and playground are opened on Church Road and ACE has a beautiful new base from which to develop further action with local people. The organisation has 34 staff and over 70 volunteers, two buildings and a community wildlife garden, and works with over 6000 people every year.



4. Saying goodbye to John

At the end of March, John Hallett stepped down as Director of ACE. Following a careful and thorough transition process, the ACE board appointed Michelle Powell and Dave Horton as Co-Directors. John, Michelle and Dave have worked together since the very beginning of ACE, shaping it through their vision and hard work into the thriving charity it is today.

It has been hard to say goodbye to our friend and founding Director, John. We're so grateful for all of the hard work, heart and soul that he poured into ACE and into the community in Ely and Caerau. After 18 years living in Ely, John and his wife Sophie have moved to West Wales to start a new chapter with more adventures to come. We wish them all the best.

In July 2021, under Covid restrictions, we held an outdoor party for staff and volunteers in the car park of the Dusty Forge to celebrate ACE's 10th anniversary and give John a good send off. There were emotional speeches and an incredible 10th birthday cake made by Thereze McCarthy. John was presented with a book of farewell messages, a present and a gift of ceramic mugs made by ACE Artist Nic Parsons in our arts workshop.

It was the first time that many of ACE's staff and volunteers had seen each other in person since the beginning of the pandemic. It was also a bittersweet occasion as we had recently suffered the loss of our dear friend and colleague Caroline Barr. Staff and volunteers came together to share our memories of Caroline, making clay moulds and pressing items into the clay that reminded us of Caroline. Nic Parsons then used these moulds to create the collaborative artwork to commemorate Caroline that is now on display in the main reception area of the Dusty Forge.



5. *In memory of Caroline*

In March everyone involved with ACE was utterly devastated at the loss of our beautiful friend and colleague, Caroline Barr. Caroline started with ACE as a volunteer several years ago, joining in with litter picks and other activities. She was a wonderful and inspiring presence from the beginning and, when she later applied for a job with us, we were delighted to welcome her to the staff team. She took up a place right at the heart of the 'ACE family' where her kindness and hospitality meant she was ideally suited to leading our food projects, including establishing our very successful Community Pantry. She dedicated endless hours, days, weeks, months and years of her time to helping people in our community and made a lasting difference to so many lives. She leaves a hole in ACE that will never be filled and we have been finding ways to keep her 'with us' as we move forward.

Our ACE Arts Coordinator, Nicola Parsons, helped colleagues, volunteers and friends to create a piece of collaborative art in Caroline's memory which is on permanent display at Dusty Forge. ACE volunteers have also launched Café Barr, a twice weekly café serving healthy, tasty food on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It's already becoming a focus of social life at the Dusty Forge. We'd love to see you there!



The following poem was written using quotes from Caroline's memorial book by her dear friend and colleague, Nerys Sheehan:

Caroline, our friend, our colleague, our angel above,
We will miss your humour, your kindness, your love.
Your warmth and determination to make the world a better place,
Your lovely qualities made you perfect for your role here in ACE.

You were the definition of selfless,
So many memories, too many to share.
The many ways you showed how you care.
A bowl of soup, a reassuring hug,
A cup of coffee in your favourite mug.
Your legacy will continue forever more,

We will welcome those in need through the door,
With a smile, some soup and pick them up off the floor,
With kindness, humility and no judgement at all.
We will smile, share stories, laugh and cry,
All the while looking for signs you are by.
Time stood still on the awful day,
Together as a family we will never be the same.
Your footprints of kindness pave the way,
For us all to want to be the brightness in someone's day.
We watched you grow and bloom into a beautiful flower,
Be proud of everything you did, and rest in eternal power.

ACE Stories

My ACE journey - Sheree Madea

I originally came to ACE about five years ago for support for my mental health and wellbeing and joined the art group. That helped me through a very bad breakdown. From there I got to meet Caroline and Catherine in the pantry team as well as Caroline's youngest daughter Elizabeth. They were always welcoming and let me know about community events, and **they guided me and supported me not just mentally but helping me financially as well.**

Then fast forward to recently just before lockdown, my life situation had started to improve a lot. **I heard through one of the ACE team members that they were looking for more volunteers in the pantry.** I wasn't actually aware that you could volunteer your time, because I would have done it sooner. I thought it was the perfect opportunity for me to thank the whole of the ACE team, everybody who had helped me along my journey from when I went through my struggles to the present time.

I was really struggling in lockdown with not being able to see family and friends, **so all round it was a way of me giving back and me keeping my own mental health and wellbeing going.** It was a way to say thank you for giving me that helping hand and possibly helping others in that same way. **I started off being supported and now I'm on the other side of things, helping others and volunteering my time. Ever since then I haven't looked back, I've loved it.**

I didn't know where to start or what I could do and nobody passed judgement, everybody was welcoming. Literally every member of staff, I've got to say, somewhere along the lines I've had that relationship and kinda been guided on and I feel like a lot of people have felt like that as well. And that's why they feel like it's second nature to give back, they just feel so thankful and they don't know how to outlet that gratefulness. **You want to do something good for someone**

else, you want to help, and continue on that bowling ball of kindness. It sounds cliché but it's true!

Helping people makes me feel amazing! You feel so humble and so grateful. It's been so nice meeting new people and building new friendships. It's been kind of therapeutic in a way, we all offload and share our problems with each other, we help and support each other. It's been really good at building my skills as well, because in this small amount of time, I've developed my communication skills, I've done first aid, I've done a food hygiene course, I've done a nutritional course, it's helped my family home life as well. I've been learning about food poverty and how to tackle it and you know teach others those skills that you are learning as well, it's just been absolutely great in that sense.

It helps me to build up my experience for future job roles because I've been doing something with my time, I've been learning. I always worked from a young age and then when I had children that was kind of absent from my life so **it's been good to build up that part of me that used to be.**

It's fascinating to see how the whole ACE team works as well, from people who come in and want to volunteer to the funding and how that's done. So if I didn't have those significant steps **from being supported to then coming on the volunteer team to building up my skill set and getting involved in other things as well... every part of the journey has been significant because it's got me to where I am today.** And it's grown me as a person, definitely in the last few months since lockdown.

I definitely want to continue to be a part of the pantry. I would like to grow my skill set, I feel like this is my forte, this is something I would like to do for a career as well as a volunteer based role because I love it. **I love being involved, I love being active within the community and I love just being part of something that's unique and it's different to any other job role or**

anything out there, it doesn't feel like a job, it feels natural to do something like that. So for me personally I see myself hopefully training and coming further in the next few years, as my daughter goes into full time education and I have that extra time.

When I joined pantry, I was quite overwhelmed and quite honoured to be a part of Caroline's team. And that's genuine, because **she showed passion for what she did. She wasn't just sitting down with dreams and ideas, she was trying to make that happen.** And it kind of inspired me to think I would like to do something like that myself. When she passed, it was devastating to the whole team, but it did hit me because this person I began to grow with, she's now all of a sudden gone. Her daughter too was so welcoming to my children, she had adopted her mum's ways and that kindness and caringness is embedded inside her.

In recent days, **Caroline has been my motivation to keep going because she helped me and others so much, that should be lived on.** It inspired me and it made me determined that this woman's dream needs to be carried on, her legacy needs to grow, because she had so much left to do and that deserves to be spoken and heard. So I suppose this is my way of giving back to her as well, more than anything.

It's been a difficult few months since Caroline's passing, but I have to commemorate Stacie for taking on the job at hand. She's taken the pantry on such a journey that I think Caroline would be proud of, I really do. It's not an easy position to be put in, and Caroline was a friend of hers. Helen has been brilliant too, she handled the transition in a lovely way, so professionally and with such care. Now Stacie has taken that torch and she's carrying us all through and she's doing really well. It's a privilege to be part of it.

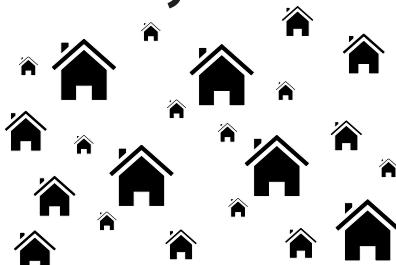


6. Community Support

6.1 Community Support

ACE delivers tailored energy advice and support to those facing financial hardship. We work with GP surgeries, schools and others to ensure that those most at risk are identified and able to access support. Our advice helps people to claim benefits and challenge benefit decisions, reduce energy costs, replace broken appliances and clear debt.

£249,158.64



ACE generated **£249,158.64** back into the community through income maximisation, fuel savings, warm home discount applications and access to grants.

During the lockdowns we switched to telephone appointments, delivered food and checked on the welfare of people isolating at home. Having this presence in the community enabled people to express concerns for neighbours. We were able to generate £249,158.64 back into the community through income maximisation, fuel savings, warm home discount applications and access to grants.

In 2020-21 we supported 2857 vulnerable households. Emma received supermarket vouchers when her income fell due to furlough. She said: “I think this grant is a fantastic help for families who are struggling at these times, it helped me immensely when I was down to my last couple of pounds knowing I could feed my children with the help of this grant”.

6.2 Working Well – Weekenders Project

“It made us sit down as a family at least once a week to enjoy a game and have fun conversations, we really enjoyed trying new board games”. - Michelle



The Weekenders Project is funded by the National Lottery Helping Working Families Programme. During lockdown we conducted research with families and found that 83% of households had worsened mental health. Children were fed up with screens and parents were juggling working from home with home schooling, feeling guilty they weren't able to spend quality time together.

We designed a 6 week programme of activities to help families feel more connected, learn, give back and be active. Conversation starters and emotional literacy activities helped to develop family wellbeing. After lockdown, we also began a monthly Saturday stay and play session, accessible to those who work in the week.

Families reported that they enjoyed having a set time to do something new and spend quality time together. They felt more connected as a family and had lots of fun too. Two parents of the original group enjoyed the experience so much that they have now taken a lead on developing the project and will be taking this forward.



6.3 - Your Local Pantry Dusty Forge

Our community food shop membership scheme reduces food shopping bills through providing access to good quality surplus food. Our partners include Food Cardiff, Church Action on Poverty, and Fareshare Cymru. Cardiff and Vale Nutrition and Dietetic Service provide training and support to Pantry volunteers to encourage members to try new ingredients and make healthier food choices.

By March 2020 our pantry had 200 members, with over 100 accessing the shop on a weekly basis. Even with limiting Covid restrictions in place we still have over 60 families each week accessing the shop with members saving an average of £15 for each shop, giving an estimated total saving of £30,000 on food costs.

Our trained team of 8 volunteers run the pantry while supporting members to learn cooking skills, make social connections and access other activities. Early in the pandemic members could not attend the Pantry, so we quickly switched to food deliveries. Up to 50 deliveries of vital food packages went out each week to our most vulnerable members.

200 members
save an average of
£15 for each shop at
the Pantry



6.4 - Dusty Community Shop

The Dusty Community Shop is run by a team of dedicated volunteers, providing clothing and household items on a 'pay what you can' basis since 2016. "We get people coming in off the streets, cold and hungry, so we help them out and give them some clothes and a cup of tea or coffee. We make everyone feel welcome." - Stella, Volunteer.

Covid-19 restrictions forced the shop to stay closed for most of 2020. After careful planning, the shop reopened in May 2021. We continue to prioritise the safety of our community members, volunteers and pantry members. We are so grateful for the patience, hard work and dedication of our volunteers in the shop.

The Community Shop serves around 100 people a week. We are now open again with Covid-safe arrangements in place on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. Many families have bought second-hand school uniforms from the shop. A highlight was our halloween costumes sale which raised £345 for ACE. Donations are welcome, either cash or good quality items.

"I feel like I'm making a real impact, helping people that need it most." - Tracy, Volunteer

7. Health and wellbeing



7.1 Mental Health Support

The 1:1 Guided Self-Help and Social Prescribing Service (formally known as 'Tier 0') provides Psychological Interventions in two ways. The 1:1 Guided Self-Help sessions involve working with patients through a range of workbooks on different topics from anxiety and depression to procrastination and perfectionism. The Psychoeducational courses 'Stress Control' and 'ACTION for Living' were paused throughout 2020-21 due to COVID-19.

*"I do not know how I would have coped if I had not had the support of the service." - **Patient**.*

In response to COVID-19 ACE introduced new measures to support service delivery through a new way of working. As 1:1 appointments were no longer possible in GP surgeries, telephone and video call appointments were implemented. Appointment times were also increased from 30 to 60 minutes to allow for more support to patients during the pandemic.

The response from existing and new patients has been positive, with 991 patients engaging in the 1:1 Guided Self-Help sessions alone in 2020-21, evidencing the need for the service. Positive outcomes reported by participants were improvements in: managing their mental health, physical health & self care, social networks, identity & self esteem, and trust & hope for the future.

7.2 'Yourspace' Wellbeing support

'Yourspace' provides 1:1 support to help people connect to local groups, activities and services in order to improve wellbeing and works with the community to develop wellbeing activities. The service was commissioned by Cardiff and Vale University Health Board as part of the Cardiff South West Primary Care Cluster's transformation project to enhance support for local patients.

The Covid pandemic increased the need for wellbeing support while removing opportunities for people to come together. We worked with the Cluster's Integrated Care Hub to reach out to patients identified as vulnerable. We developed and adapted activities in response to changing restrictions, providing a mix of online groups, outdoor activities and resources for use at home.

From April-Sept 2020 we called 127 people to offer wellbeing support, making over 1000 calls and helping with food, prescription collection, digital inclusion and access to key services. Over the whole year 232 people received 1:1 support, 41 accessed a group/activity and 141 received resources to help them stay active and feel connected at home.

"It's been invaluable, it's been a lifeblood. Knowing that you are going to call has kept me going knowing there is something in the diary. Without those things I would feel much more alone."



7.3 ACE Phone Friends



Initially piloted with in the Compassionate Communities project, Phone Friends connects people with a volunteer from their local community for a friendly, weekly telephone chat for 15 to 30 minutes. We match people who have shared interests and hobbies. Often people find out about all sorts of things they have in common as they get to know one another.

In the first lockdown there was an urgent need to replace the lost informal, day-to-day contact that people previously enjoyed at the Dusty Forge. At the same time, many of our volunteers were having to shield for health reasons and were feeling frustrated at being unable to volunteer with food and prescription deliveries. Phone Friends filled the gap.

Initially Phone Friends supported 27 people, working with 'Yourspace' and health service partners to identify those most in need. With support from the Coronavirus Mental Health Support Fund Wales, we partnered with Cardiff People First to include people with a learning disability as participants and volunteers, reaching 37 additional people between Nov '20 and March '21.

“As someone who has been helped and given new hope by the ACE Phone Friend Project, formed by caring people with a listening ear who understand the confusion, loss and loneliness that so many of us are experiencing during the dark days of this pandemic, I know we all matter and no one should feel forgotten or unimportant. Communicating with each other because we care is vital. Whether a listening ear is needed or the opportunity to become a volunteer, as I want to, this is possible. Phone Friends can help us be positive and look forward to better times ahead.” - **Elaine.**

7.4 ACE Compassionate Communities



ACE Compassionate Communities is funded and supported by Macmillan Cancer Care and works with the communities of South West Cardiff to enhance support and compassion for people experiencing isolation, loneliness or disconnection from the community due to illness, caring responsibilities, approaching end of life and/or bereavement.

Networks of support of family, friends and neighbours are vital to those experiencing care-giving, ill health, death and bereavement. Covid has affected people's support networks and their confidence in accessing them. ACE Compassionate Communities hopes to increase the support people receive from their local community and offer bespoke support to those who need it, when they need it most.

Our new bereavement peer support groups, 'Grief Space', have proved to be a very meaningful source of support. 40 people benefitted from artist-led 'Creative Grief Space' sessions. We delivered wellbeing boxes with Kindness Cards made by local children to 42 people. We collected prescriptions for 78 people. And through our Phone Friends pilot, 27 people received a weekly phone call during lockdown.

“At Grief Space, I really feel that by sharing our bereavements, both recent ones and older, we all realise that whatever emotion we experience, in whatever order we experience them in, we’re all normal.” - **Helen.**

8. ACE Projects

8.1 ACE Youth

ACE Youth work provides a safe and accessible space for young people. We listen to young people and their families and community and develop provisions that empower them. Adapting quickly to ever-changing Covid restrictions, we have delivered online cooking and wellbeing sessions, as well as street based and outdoor youth clubs, engaging with 550 young people in 2020-21.



ACE Youth workers have observed the impact of Covid-19 on young people's confidence and social skills: young people are bored, anxious and lack confidence in large groups. Our regular weekly street based sessions and partnership working have helped to resolve increasing tensions and anti-social behaviour. Our youth garden sessions have proved beneficial in improving confidence for six young people.

Our youth cooking course was a success throughout lockdown. We delivered over 55 food parcels and recipes fortnightly to young people in Caerau and Pentrebane, who prepared food and shared pictures on our Facebook page. We aim to continue our food related work in our upcoming open access youth club.

"We have enjoyed attending the weekly ace youth meetings at the dusty, it has helped us with the confidence to try new things. We thoroughly enjoyed the summer activities too and are looking forward to youth club."

- Local young person.

ACE Stories

Learning with CAER - Doug



I have been volunteering on and off for about 15 years, which started off with a community garden at Redhouse farm. My wife, daughter and I had been involved in a bad accident and I hadn't really done anything for a couple of years. I wasn't injured but it was so close, and had we been hit another inch or two to the left it could have been a lot worse. I was having a lot of bad dreams and generally I didn't want to go out.

I became involved in CAER after I'd been up to the hog roast they'd had up at the site, and once I had been to the work sessions a few times, I just had a bit more interest. The main change for me through getting involved in CAER has been getting the University course. They run a scheme called Pathways to a Degree which is a collection of part time modules which allow you to gain sixty

credits for the course next year. I doubt that I would have got to this point on my own.

I spent most of my time at school sat at the back messing about, and barely passed my CSE's. Later on, with the bouts of unemployment I had, they were offering courses like forklift courses and other stuff. I did college for 6 months, car mechanics and so between work and unemployment that got me started and I haven't stopped ever since. My daughter started college and the day that she signed on, I went and signed on for Environmental Management. I did that for 2 years as a HND. It was mostly outside, we did all sorts, fencing and lots of other things. I like working with people generally, and perhaps I'll just keep on in that direction.

I'd done the environmental course which is why I like to get out into the woods and hopefully get them tidied up and sorted out. I like the woodland more than anything, I am interested in the history and I did the writers course. Over the next few years, I'd like to see the woods developed as an asset and then eventually you could get one or two jobs out of it, you could get qualified people

or train people up to look after the woods. That's a long term thing that's been floating around in my mind.

CAER has already made a difference just helping people recognise the Hillfort is here. I suppose a lot of people, apart from coming up here to walk their dogs, didn't really realise what was here. I think once this place has been done up and been in the papers and on TV, hopefully it will be another asset for the community. I don't think it will make a difference to everyone but the people that care about it, it will. It'll give them something to do, something to be proud of. There's 5000 years of history here so you know, if the theories are all correct and this is where it all started off, communities grew outwards from here.

I'm a full-time carer for my wife. She has good days and bad days, and all this all gets me out of the house to be honest. It's a nice place to come up and work, it's a good atmosphere and basically we're a community. That sounds a bit cheesy, but I stood with the rest of our group at the opening of the heritage centre, and it made it all worth it.

8.2 CAER Heritage Hidden Hillfort

The last 18 months has been challenging for all of us, stuck in our homes and unable to meet up with friends, relatives and all the community and volunteering groups that mean so much to us. The Hidden Hillfort Project is no exception.



We're now in our second year of a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant to create a Community Heritage Centre at Caerau Hillfort along with accessible heritage trails, interpretation, learning and creative opportunities. During the last year we've had to find new ways of doing things and making sure local people are still at the heart of everything. In 2020-21 over 600 people participated or visited project activities, from online zoom workshops and virtual 'Ask an Archaeologist' sessions with local schools, to getting their hands dirty with the CAER Big Dig where almost 200 local people did 'mini-digs' in their gardens to help discover the history of their local community.

Outside of lockdowns our regular volunteering group 'Love Our Hillfort' meets weekly on a Friday to litter pick, create pathways and clear vegetation around the Hillfort. Their work has really made a difference – recently installed footfall counters at the site have shown us that over 18,000 people visited the Hillfort in 2020-21, almost double that of the previous year. The CAER Team have been fantastic, particularly Sulafa, Charlotte and Nic who have made sure everything has kept running and even developed a Heritage Food Parcel project to help local families during these difficult times.

In January 2021 renovation work by Willis Construction started on the old Gospel Hall on Church Road to turn it into a new Community Heritage Centre. Alongside that development has been the installation of a new children's playpark in the parkland next to the centre funded by Wales and West Housing Association and Cardiff Council. Both were co-designed by local people and were opened in September by First Minister Mark Drakeford and MP for Cardiff West Kevin Brennan. There's lots more work to do over the coming 12 months. We've welcomed a new member to the team, Rosie, and we'd love more people to get involved – if you're interested please contact the CAER team at caerheritage@aceplace.org



Curiosity Club

During the lockdown we adapted to online delivery and created a new website with learning resources for young people and we hosted digital youth sessions. The young people helped to create an online Iron Age experience which we hosted at the Cardiff Science festival in February 2021.

Since then, Curiosity have engaged with around 200 young people. We have run one off events such as the Summer of Smiles fun day and the CAER heritage centre opening, alongside the summer holiday enrichment programme and our usual youth club sessions.

Curiosity Club have been working to set up a Cardiff wide STEM network to share resources, knowledge and explore STEM opportunities outside of the team's expertise. It will also provide opportunities to young people in their individual area of interest that might not otherwise be possible.

Find out more about Curiosity club here <https://www.curiosityclub.uk/>

8.3 ACE Training

ACE Training is our locally based training enterprise. We offer courses in Health and Safety, Emergency First Aid at Work, Manual Handling and Asbestos Awareness. Our courses are accessed by people who are currently seeking employment and local businesses whose staff need training or refresher courses.

“Fi was really helpful and with a bit more revising I passed when I sat the test 3rd time lucky! The Dusty Forge is a friendly place with ‘five star’ staff who go out of their way to help. Really pleased and hopefully starting work soon.”
- Dennis Price (Level 1 Health & Safety in Construction Environment)



There are 8,400 people in Cardiff who are unemployed (not incl. long-term sick), 4.3% of the population. Across the city 5.1% of the population have no qualifications (Nomis 2020-21). The construction industry continued to operate throughout the pandemic. There were opportunities for employment, but no means of delivering training for those who needed qualifications to work on a construction site.



By July 2020, training centres could re-open and we carefully adapted to a new way of working safely throughout Covid. We provided training to 155 learners, in partnership with 10 employment support organisations (all course places fully funded) and 3 businesses. 61% of learners achieved a qualification that will enable them to gain employment.



8.4 Volunteering

Volunteers are the life-blood of ACE. Without volunteers, many of our projects would not be able to run, and lives in Ely & Caerau would suffer. Throughout an incredibly difficult 18 months, 75 volunteers have supported and helped deliver projects for our local communities and have done it with passion and pride.

Covid's impact resulted in people being thrust into isolation, losing jobs and struggling financially. Others were too anxious to leave their homes or needed to isolate for health reasons. As such, projects adapted and volunteers stepped up wherever they could to make life better for those in their communities.

Many projects had to close temporarily, yet volunteers were able to continue running the Pantry, to ensure people could feed their families, delivered food and prescriptions to those who were unable to get out, and phoned those isolated and lonely to ensure people stayed connected. Our volunteers have been simply amazing!

8.5 Summer of Smiles



During the summer of 2021 Cardiff Council planned and funded a programme of activities for young people, children and families called 'Summer of Smiles'. Participants enjoyed a huge range of activities that were provided right across the city.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on everyone in very many ways. For young people and children, it has meant extended periods away from school and significant disruption to their social lives, often leading to increased anxiety, stress and depression. By the summer there was an urgent need for positive, fun, sociable activities to raise spirits.

Through Summer of Smiles ACE were able to bring smiles to 1132 children, parents, carers and young people in Ely and Caerau. Activities included: Go Karting, Pop-up music and sports sessions, a CAER time travelling fun day, gorge walking, day trips, T-shirt design and printing, watch making, dance workshops, and an ACE Youth celebration at Dusty Forge.



"Being able to attend the Go-Kart trip was a highlight of my summer. I really enjoyed the racing and pizza and wouldn't have been able to attend if it wasn't for free. Thanks to Dannielle, Esther and Taylor for making it a great day." - Summer of Smiles participant.

8.6 ACE Arts



"I love doing the art, everything - I love all the teachers and new friends. I feel relaxed when I'm here and I feel supported." - Amanda.

ACE Arts creates opportunities to explore the arts for people who face barriers to engaging with art (due to income, mental health, disability, etc.). Art group members develop their own creative practice through free weekly workshops. Our professional artists support every participant to create work in a range of art forms, develop their skills and improve their wellbeing.

Art activities were paused for months at a time due to Covid-19, but we adapted to meet together in small, safe groups as soon as restrictions allowed, with 26 people engaging in creative sessions across 6 workshops a week, funded by Arts Council Wales. 35 people accessed art workshops between April 2020 and July 2021.

Participants developed skills and confidence and made beautiful ceramic, textile and print-based art work which was displayed in Wales Millennium Centre's 'Your Voice' Exhibition throughout August 2021. Participants report feeling more confident, creative and happy. Linda told us: 'I feel more confident since coming here, it helps with my depression.'

ACE Stories

I moved to Cardiff two years ago. I had a lot going on, was worried about a family member's health and was getting quite anxious so the GP referred me to Mags (ACE Primary Mental Health Worker). Mags was lovely and so kind. When she contacted me about helping with Phone Friends and I had recently been talking to my friend about volunteering, it felt like it fell in my lap really. Sometimes things just come your way.

Mags has been so nice to me. I think when you've been dealing with mental health problems you become a bit more aware, some people who haven't ever had problems like that don't realise what it's like. It's not a nice place to be, and I don't always have great days, but it's nice to try to perhaps give a little back to people with similar difficulties and concerns.

I wanted to do volunteering, particularly being a bit stuck inside for a while, I thought it would be great to do something. I thought if I had been feeling anxious and worried there must

Mike's Story - Being part of the community

be so many other people who are feeling anxious and worried and it was a good opportunity to help out. Giving is quite rewarding as well. I'm retired and look after my mum; it's been important for me to have that sense of purpose as well.

I've been involved in Phone Friends for six months now. You get a reliable person calling you each week, who will just listen without prejudice, doesn't judge, and helps you stay positive. I call two people every week and I've learned a lot about building a rapport and earning trust. Some people have had hard experiences of being let down so it's about letting them have confidence in you. A really core one is about learning to listen. How often do we really listen to what people are saying and not just end up talking about ourselves? It's almost like a new skill that I'm still trying to develop.

I think Phone Friends has stretched me in a way, the responsibility of committing to a regular call. Quite often

you don't feel like it, you've had a bad day, and you've got to push yourself into a friendlier place, to think of others and be more compassionate. Quite a few times I've done a call, thinking I wasn't exactly going to enjoy that one, and afterwards it's like oh, that went well, it was actually quite rewarding. You think, get over yourself a bit.

It's also been about opening doors. I didn't know about this place, being new to the area, so meeting all these lovely people... it's a nice community down here. It's really reassuring to know that this place is here. I think a big change for me has been around identity, being part of the community. I'm beginning to feel more grounded, developing friendships and getting to know people from the area. So hopefully that continues. I thought I was a very independent person but I think we all need some human contact at times. I'd love to get more involved, as things change over the years, you've got so many great projects going on. I love getting down here and getting involved.

9. Partners and other projects

9.1 Dusty Shed



The Dusty Shed is an independent charity, administered by its members, that augments the work of the Dusty Forge by supporting lonely and socially isolated people in Caerau and Ely. It does this by providing a physically and emotionally safe place where members can engage in woodworking and craft activities, or simply swap stories over a cup of tea. The members also provide voluntary 'odd job' support to the Forge.

"I felt welcome as soon as I got chatting to some of the guys in the workshop and I thought this is a decent safe place and I would like to be involved!"

- Dusty Shed member.

Dusty Shed members support each other emotionally, by the sharing of life skills, and in the physical activities they undertake, by the sharing of knowledge. Many members have commented that since attending the Shed they have a renewed feeling of self-worth.

During the pandemic the Shed closed, but maintained contact with its members through a WhatsApp group, and took the opportunity to develop a covered breakout area where more socially oriented activities can occur. Since it reopened in May 2021, Shed membership has doubled, due mainly to the utilisation of this new facility.



9.2 Repair Café

Our repair cafe team at the Dusty Forge celebrated our second anniversary in October – two years of great challenges during the pandemic and growing popularity! The Dusty provides a welcoming venue for monthly pop-up repair cafe events run by our enthusiastic and skilled team of volunteer fixers. Our free service complements several other projects encouraging sustainability at the Dusty, including the community pantry, community kitchen and the new Library of Things with Benthyg.



Our customers mainly bring broken household items for repair so that we can keep our everyday lives going. But people visit our repair cafe from wider Cardiff and beyond, for example bringing bikes, family heirlooms and elderly teddy bears to be mended. Our new volunteer Gareth offers expert 1-2-1 advice on making the best use of digital equipment such as phones, tablets, and laptops.

"It's great to meet up with loads of new people... from all walks of life but with the same need... to help them by repairing their item and preventing it just being thrown out with the rubbish and into landfill. I'd encourage everyone to consider what they would enjoy doing in their spare time and how they can help out within the community."

Nigel (Volunteer), a.k.a. 'Mr. Fix it.' 71 .



9.3 Benthyg - Library of Things



ACE has teamed up with Benthyg Cymru to open a Library of things based at the Dusty Forge. The idea is to share our resources within our community, so that everyone can borrow whatever they need cheaply and easily. It creates a culture of resilience and environmental sustainability that brings communities together to share items, knowledge and skills.

Items available to borrow include gardening and DIY tools, camping equipment and much more, all available to borrow for less than you'd expect to pay second hand, and with the opportunity to pay in time instead of cash. Dale Ovenstone, ACE Estates manager and Benthyg Development Officer, is looking after the Library of things.

"Just sign up, become a member and borrow useful items for a small fee. Why buy when you can borrow? People can donate useful items they don't need and items can be delivered and collected. Want to get involved? Volunteering offers the opportunity to broaden your horizons, meet new people and share knowledge & skills with our community." - Dale.



10. ACE's Covid response

Life at the Dusty Forge changed significantly when COVID hit in early 2020. Our doors closed, activity was drawn to a minimum with only key services such as the Pantry, Phone Friends and Youth Food Cooking at home projects being delivered. Intermittently across the year, ACE Training provided health and safety courses to those seeking employment.

The New Year was not filled with joy, we were still in lockdown; the Dusty Forge still closed for several months to come. However, there was light at the end of the tunnel! Lockdown restrictions eased at the end of April and outdoor activities were able to restart, Grow Cardiff gardening group and Love Our Hillfort volunteer sessions being the first to resume.

In May we were able to open the doors of the Dusty Forge and welcome back the ACE Arts Group and the Dusty Community Shop,

both dearly missed by participants, volunteers and staff. By June something exciting was beginning to happen, there was renewed interest from volunteer led social and wellbeing support groups Knit and Natter and Retreat, who were keen to resume their much missed activity, and excitingly a new group, Allie's Crochet, was set up. There was a renewed vigour in the community, people were starting to mobilise, clearly ready to step outside, wanting to be a part of something more than life had previously allowed. As the months progressed the Dusty Forge was increasingly becoming that well-loved hub and place of activity that we all knew it to be.

ACE's risk assessments for the building and activities meant that we were able to put in place a series of safety measures to keep people safe and minimize the risk of exposure to COVID. Groups, community members, volunteers and staff all

took a lead in implementing this, completing forms upon forms week on week following all safety measures set in place; without them we would not have been able to keep the Dusty a COVID safe space. Whilst COVID has been exceptionally hard to live with there have been many positives we have learnt along the way. The most impactful for ACE is how we have not only been able to diversify the activities, projects and services we deliver but also the way in which we operate daily.

Michelle Powell, Co-Director

11. ACE Giving

Could you donate £5 a month to ACE? Everything raised goes towards continuing and developing ACE's essential work, and every bit counts! It's easy to sign up here on our Local Giving page:
<https://localgiving.org/charity/ace-action-in-caerau-ely/>

We have been blown away by the generosity of supporters in the financial year April 2020 - March 2021. We raised £3624 in our ACE Coronavirus response appeal, which enabled us to respond rapidly as the pandemic erupted and direct help to the people who needed it most. In October 2020 our staff and volunteers walked and ran a combined 100 miles for ACE and raised £1820. Our Director, John Hallett, also ran 100 miles by himself in 6 days! In December, our first Winter Fuel Crisis Appeal raised £806 to fund emergency boiler repairs for people left unable to heat their homes in winter.

In March 2022, 5 ACE staff members plan to run the Cardiff Half Marathon, which has been postponed several times. In October 2021 they ran and walked 10 miles each to celebrate ACE's 10th birthday and kick start their training and they raised £119 to support our Phone Friends project.

Our current Winter Warmth Appeal started with a brilliant idea from one of our pantry volunteers, to offer people in need a 'stay warm at

home' box. Filled with blankets, slippers, hot water bottles and thoughtful treats, the boxes will support wellbeing over the cold winter months and help people know that someone cares for them. If you would like to donate, please visit

<https://localgiving.org/appeal/winterwarmthappeal/>

We are so grateful to everyone who supports ACE, and especially to our small but faithful crew who donate every month through direct debit. We hope to have 10 regular supporters by the end of 2022. Could you commit to a small monthly contribution to ACE? Every pound raised helps to continue and develop our essential work. It's easy to sign up here on our Local Giving page:

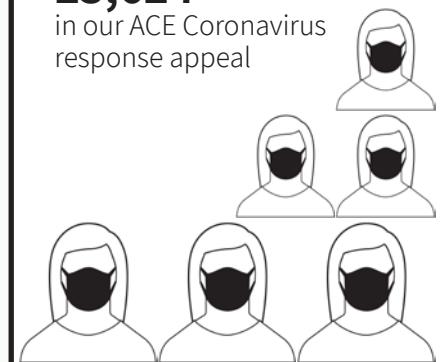
<https://localgiving.org/charity/ace-action-in-caerau-ely/>



ACE raised

£3,624

in our ACE Coronavirus response appeal

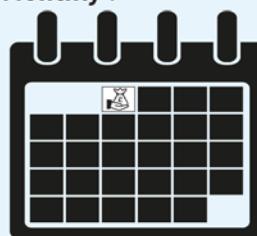


You can make a **One Off Payment** - from as little as:



will support activities such as our mental health work, helping families manage money and benefits or helping to keep the award winning Dusty Forge centre open.

Better still, by choosing **'Give Monthly'**:



you can make a regular, monthly donation - this helps ACE plan ahead and work sustainably.

Thank you for all your support!
It makes a real difference to the lives of real people in our community.

12. ACE Trustees



Mel Witherden (Chair) is a retired third sector/charity consultant.

Dave King (Treasurer) is a qualified accountant and experienced treasurer

Marian Dixey lives in Fairwater. She is an active volunteer and has worked for the NHS for over 30 years.

Martin Hulland is the head teacher of Cardiff West Community High School.

Helen McCarthy lives in Ely and is a lead

volunteer on the CAER Heritage Project.

Jean O'Keefe lives in Caerau. She is an active local volunteer.

Anne O'Regan lives in Caerau. She is an active local volunteer.

Oonagh Scott grew up in Ely. She is a successful business woman.

James Roach lives in Ely. He is an active volunteer and contributes finance skills.

Dr Dave Wyatt is Reader in Medieval History, Community and Engagement. School of History, Archaeology and Religion, Cardiff University.

Chris Lannen is a qualified Financial Advisor

Leyton Smith lives in Caerau. He is an active volunteer on ACE community health projects.

ACE Volunteers

THANK YOU to all of our volunteers, without whom our work would not be possible!



Adam Mules

Alice Clarke

Alex Withey

Amanda Ward

Andrew Way

Anne-Louise Pring

Anne O'Regan

Arthur Brown

Bea Roberts

Bridget Rendle

Candy Moss

Carlin Underhill

Caroline Holroyd

Catherine Oakley

Charlotte McIntosh

Chris Lannen

Christina Dunn

Christine Broke

Christine Howell

Dale Gooding

Dale Ovenstone

Dave King

Dave Wyatt

Deanne Lannen

Diane Katy

Doug Smith

Doug Stowell

Elaine Harris

Elizabeth Lewis (Liz)

Emily Andrews

Fiona Robinson

Frankie Curtis

Hayely Sterio

Helen Green

Helen Hanrahan

Helen McCarthy

Issy Gooch

Jacqie Young

James Roach

Jamie Hayes

Janice Refalo

Jay Sheppard

Jean O'Keefe

Jeff Clarke

Julie Chancellor

Karl Hayes

Katie Riggs

Kelly Thomas

Kerry Pace

Kyle Bebb

Lauren Ford

Leyton Smith

Lisa Twine

Lynne Beresford

Margaret James

Mari Dunphy

Marian Dixey

Mark Hughes

Martin Hulland

Mel Witherden

Michaela Ward

Michael Hack

Mike Kelly

Natasha Hayes

Oonagh Scott

Pat Stowell

Paulino Rodrigues

Penny Smith

Pete Herbert-James

Rob Jones

Rosemary Freeman

Sally Owens

Sarah Evans

Sarah North

Sarah Whitfield

Scott Morgan

Sheree Richards

Sian Davies

Stacey Bedford

Stella Attard

Tania Clarke

Terry Samuel

Tracy Olsen

ACE Staff



Amber Williams

Primary Mental Health Worker

Becci Booker

Community Artist

Becki Miller

Senior Development Officer – Working Well / Primary Mental Health Worker / Mental Health Development Worker

Becky Matyus

ACE Arts Sustainability and Accessibility Officer

Carly Whelpley

Mental Health Coordinator

Caroline Barr

Community Health Development Officer / Youth Support Worker

Charlotte McCarthy

Caer Development Officer / Curiosity Development Officer / Mental Health Development Worker

Christina Evans

Wellbeing Connector

Dale Ovenstone

Estates Officer / Benthyg Development Officer

Danielle Afferion

Youth Support Worker

Dave Horton

Co-Director

Donna Hurley

Working Well Development Officer

Esther Yeboah-Afari

Senior Youth Development Officer

Fiona McCormick

Training Support Officer

George Keane

Communications & Marketing Officer / Dusty Shed Officer / Web Developer

Hasan Roap

Finance Officer

Hazel Cryer

Health and Wellbeing Coordinator

Helen Bull

Volunteer Development Officer

James Thomas

Primary Mental Health Worker / Wellbeing Connector

Janine Campbell

Community Health Development Worker / Food Project Officer

Julie Evans

Senior Administrator

Kate Miller

Primary Mental Health Worker

Kimberley Jones

Macmillan Development Officer

Lynette Hartman

Wellbeing Connector

Mags Lyons

Senior Wellbeing Officer

Michelle Powell

Co-Director

Nerys Sheehan

Senior development Officer - Community Support / Working Well

Nicola Parsons

Community Arts Coordinator

Poppy Hodgkinson

Curiosity Development Officer

Rachel Hart

Wellbeing Connector / Wellbeing Officer

Rosie Freeman

Hidden Hillfort Curator

Sabrina Driscoll

Primary Mental Health Worker

Sam Froud-Powell

Community Support Coordinator

Sarah Griffiths

Together for Trowbridge and St Mellons - Community Development Officer

Sharon McGrath

ACE Receptionist

Stacie Leek

Primary Mental Health Worker / Pantry Food Project Officer

Taela Mae-Davies

Macmillan Development Officer

Vaida Barzdiate

Community Health Development Officer / Diana Garden Development Officer

We would like to thank the staff who have moved on to pastures new for their hard work and dedication to ACE.

Aled Williams

Billy Mainprize

Denise Rahman

Imogen Higgins

John Hallett

Kathryn Hobbs

Sheila Littleboy

Sophie Randall

Sulafa Abushal

Taylor Jeffries

13. Finance Report

ACE received a total income of 1,342,043 in the 2020-21 financial year. This is an increase of £158,031 from the previous year. Of this, ACE spent £1,020,241 with £321,802 being carried forward as restricted project income. The income was made up of service delivery contract income (28%), generated income (6%) and project grant income (66%).

Some of our biggest funders for the year included NHS Cardiff and Vale (Tier 0 Mental Health service and Yourspace Wellbeing service - £376,930) and The National Lottery Community Fund (Working Well - £161,198).

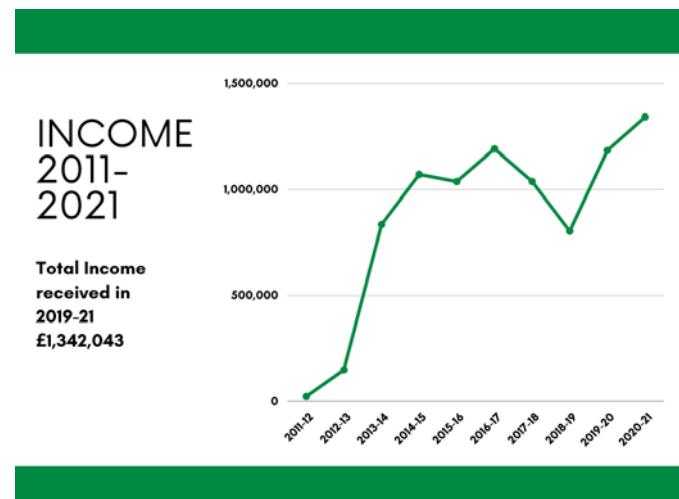
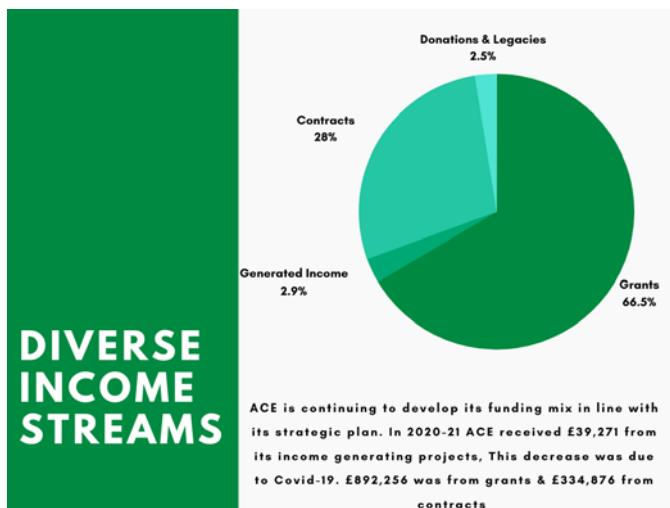
The Income received in 2020-21 was spread across 37 projects. The year 2020-21 has been different to any other we have experienced as we all responded to a changing climate due to the impact of COVID-19. ACE

made full use of available COVID response grants to repurpose ACE projects, activities and services to meet the needs presented by COVID within our communities and to assist with the shortfall of income generated from loss of training delivery and room hire.

Over our last 9 years of operation ACE has added approx. £9m to the local economy across Cardiff West. A proportion of this income was a result of the Welsh Government Communities First programme. Post Communities First the period of 2018-2021 £3,310,765 million has been generated through social enterprise activities, grant applications and fundraising.

The year 2020-21 has been another successful year where ACE has been implementing its strategic plan objectives to diversify income

streams and acquire and develop new property. ACE invested a proportion of its reserves to purchase a house, an asset that will protect ACE reserves. This investment creates an enterprise stream that can contribute to ACE's management costs, which are not usually provided for in the funding that ACE is able to secure, as well as resources to feed back into community activity and services. Moreover, the investment means a property has been renovated and brought back into use and provides a forever home to a local family. One that has a conscientious and socially responsible landlord and is supported through ACE's Community Support offering, working alongside the family to ensure they are safe, and feel protected in their new home.



14. Our Funders and Partners

ACE Funders



ACE Partners



Discussing

High Ropes

Gorge Walking



Our Place: Dusty Forge
460 Cowbridge Rd West, Ely
Cardiff CF5 5BZ, Tel: 029 2000 3132

Email: info@aceplace.org

Website: www.aceplace.org

Facebook: ACE - Action in Caerau and Ely

Twitter: @ACE_elycadera

