



Usk Town Council Annual Report 2021-2022



INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR
Cllr Glenn Roderick May 2021 to May 2022

"It has again been a great honour and privilege to serve as Chairman of Usk Town Council in the past year. I have had tremendous support from both fellow Councillors and the exceptional staff at the Sessions House.

My grateful thanks are given to the outgoing Chair Cllr Christine Wilkinson who guided us through two challenging and difficult years.

In May 2021 we held our Civic Service which took place with strict Covid restrictions. In June we supported a smaller, restricted version of Usk Open Gardens which proved to be a great success. Judging followed for Wales in Bloom, when we congratulated the new committee on their superb efforts and awards received.

The restrictions were with us for several months, but we were able to take advantage of simpler outdoor rules when we entered our 'Picnic in the River' event in June. The sun shone and our intrepid band of Medical Staff cavorted in the River Usk holding an afternoon tea party in tribute to the NHS. Amazingly, our entry gained joint first prize raising £500 for the Usk Mayor's Appeal. In August signs of lifting of Covid restrictions can be seen when we held a memorable outdoor concert at the Sessions House. This was well supported by the town.

September brought us the Usk Show, which Pam and I attended and judged the best small stallholder. Crowds were large and the sun shone.

The first indoor event was the children's Halloween Party hosted and financed by Usk Town Council. This turned out to be a huge success thanks to great efforts from Tracey, Diane, and Lyn. It really brought the community together.

Christmas came and still under restrictions we organised our Carol Service with St Mary's Church in a restricted form. It was still a lovely evening.

UTC invited a visit from Father Christmas and a band of helpers including Olaf who enthusiastically followed Santa through the town.

The New Year brought a gradual lifting of restrictions and St David Day was celebrated with a memorable concert by Usk Singing Club.

Council Business continued despite the restrictions of covid and having to use Zoom for meetings. Tribute must be paid to Cllr Christine Wilkinson who with her team has achieved so much in regard to establishing a great business plan maximising earnings from a wonderful building, hence securing the future of the Sessions House. We must also recognise the tremendous effort in achieving a grant which will make a huge difference to carrying out the major and costly repairs required by the building.

Councillor Steve Williams led us in matters of modern technology with a new digital information board. Steve has also moved us forward in Usk becoming a Smart Town.

A major achievement of the Council has been the campaign to transform the former recycling centre into a dedicated market site. Councillors were involved in developing and presenting plans to MCC and seeking their support to bring them to fruition. UTC received a substantial grant from Welsh Government Transforming Towns and UTC thank Tracey and Diane for their efforts in developing this site in order for markets to go ahead in late March.

The Council now support the campaign to protect the River Usk and its wildlife from the effects of serious pollution. There is also a drive to make Council business greener and more sustainable. I thank once again all members of Usk Council and the staff for another year of tremendous work and achievement. We have a number of outstanding individuals leaving us. Their ability and experience will be greatly missed. I thank all of you for another outstanding year. "

Cllr Glenn Roderick Mayor of Usk



Mayor of Usk

Councillor Glenn Roderick

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An introduction to the Report

Welcome to the second Annual Report from Usk Town Council. The report sets out to inform Usk residents of the many roles, responsibilities and activities undertaken by the Council during the period from May 2021 – March 2022.

As Town Clerk I work alongside Diane Richards, the Responsible Finance Officer (who is responsible for all financial records of the Council and the careful administration of its finances) and it is my role to advise and support the Council, within the law.

I hope you will find the report informative. Usk Town Council welcomes any feedback.

Tracey Huxley Clerk to the Council

THE COUNCIL

Usk Town Council (UTC) serves a population of just over 3000. It is currently made up of 12 elected members who represent the interest of the community and strive to improve the quality of life for the people of Usk.

Usk Town Council is led by the Mayor who, together with the Deputy Mayor, is elected by fellow members of UTC. This takes place at the Annual Meeting in May each year.

UTC meets on the second Monday of the month for a couple of hours (with the exception of August when there's no meeting). There are also sub- committees within the council which meet periodically. All meetings are open to the public.

There is the opportunity for Councillors to undertake a small amount of training (usually, 2/3 hours training in an evening) provided by One Voice Wales; this enables councillors to develop their skills and knowledge on local government matters and to keep up to date with changes.

The role of a Usk Town Councillor remains completely voluntary, and members do not currently receive payments.



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The Town Council has several committees of which the main ones are:

- ❖ **Finance Committee** - responsible for the running of UTC budget
- ❖ **Community Engagement** - engaging with the public (including website & social media)
- ❖ **Environment Committee** - dealing with litter, dog fouling, and leading on environmental issues.
- ❖ **Planning Committee** - although the UTC is unable to grant permission, it acts as a consultee and comments on all planning applications to Monmouthshire County Council
- ❖ **Sessions House Management Committee** - taking on the running and maintenance of the Sessions House building
- ❖ **Tourism & Events Committee** - responsible for organising community activities and events.
- ❖ **Usk Masterplan Committee** – working, and in discussion, with Monmouthshire County Council on the future of Usk and on how services can best be improved.

The Town Council's main responsibilities are.

- Street cleaning
- Providing and maintaining the Usk Park Toilets
- The provision of, and paying for, the dog waste bins to be emptied
- Providing the Christmas lights and arranging the Reindeer parade
- Supporting local events and festivals
- Organising free events in the town
- Providing grants to local groups
- Maintenance of the Sessions House
- Planning advice to MCC

Apart from the above, UTC supports the community with the following.

- Noticeboards
- Church grass cutting
- Factory Lane Allotments
- Defibrillators
- Usk Action Litter Group
- Remembrance Day Service

- Commonwealth Day Service
- Usk in Bloom
- Usk Open Gardens
- Fundraising for Charities

The Sessions House – Home to Usk Town Council

The Sessions House was opened in 1877, having taken 20 years to complete. Built as the Quarter Sessions Court for the whole of Monmouthshire it is, in true Victorian style, perfectly symmetrical even to the use of a false door to ensure that symmetry.

Sadly, the building fell into disrepair and in 1998 Usk Town Council bought it for use, not only as Council offices, but as a community resource. The purchase was supported by the whole town with organisations and individuals raising funds, and successful applications to the Heritage Lottery and CADW raised grants of £90,000 towards the restoration. The restoration continues to date.

Today, the Sessions House continues as a home for Usk Town Council and is a prestigious base for local businesses and organisations. It provides meeting rooms, conference facilities, a concert venue and a stylish setting for parties and anniversaries. The building is now licenced for Weddings and Civil Partnerships, offering unique surroundings for those special occasions. The building plays an important role in the life of Usk.

A report provided by Cllr Chris Wilkinson Chair of Usk sessions House Management Committee,

"During the past two Covid years the Sessions House has been at a standstill. No weddings took place, no concerts, meetings of local clubs and societies were cancelled or continued online, no fund raisers held and even the Town Council were barred from face-to-face meetings and resorted to Zoom. Our tenants largely worked from home and our staff alternated between office cover and home working.

Since the start of this year, with restrictions gradually being lifted, things are slowly returning to normality. There have been weddings and more booked for the coming year, clubs and societies are beginning to meet here again and there are concerts and charity events scheduled for the coming months. Usk Town Council is back meeting around the library table.

All our tenants are back in their offices and the last empty room is now occupied.

One area that has maintained its momentum over the past two years has been the continued maintenance and improvements to the building. Most of the offices have been decorated and new carpets laid, the entrance hall has also been carpeted so it is much more welcoming. The three WC's have all had a facelift making them far more presentable.

We have a smart new 'common room' for small meetings, and as a rest room for tenants, complete with instant boiling water for drinks and a dishwasher.

The ten large windows that give the building such an imposing façade are in the process of being repaired and painted. The project is over halfway through and hopefully all of the windows will be restored by this autumn.

Constant water leaks from the atriums, of which there are seventeen of all shapes and sizes, and weak points in the roof have been a constant problem causing untold damage to the fabric of the building. As a result, we have had to carry out emergency repairs on several occasions. Two atriums have now been rebuilt and another repaired. In all cases we have used 'like for like' materials in accordance with the regulations for listed buildings.

We are now working with a CADW grant to make permanent repairs to the roof area to make the building watertight.

We have appointed an architect, Amanda Needham who, in accordance with CADW requirements has completed a condition survey and is in the process of preparing tender information. We hope to go out to tender in June and appoint our preferred contractors in July. Hopefully, the work will commence early autumn and be completed well before the official deadline of February 2023.

Whilst we realise this grant will not cover all the work needed it will address the most urgent repairs and we are assured that CADW will look favourably on further grant applications. With the major repairs to the roof completed we will be able to consider the interior work required to restore those areas of the building that have been affected by rain damage in the past.

We feel we are making real progress in the restoration of this wonderful building."



THE REPORT

Activities undertaken by Usk Town Council (UTC) during the year May 2021-April 2022.

Park Toilets

The Usk Park Toilet remain a great asset to the children's park and all ongoing costs are met by Usk Town Council

Allotments

There are currently sixty-two allotments situated in Factory Lane, Usk. Although the land is owned by MCC, Usk Town Council manages the site. The current fee is £20 per five perch per annum.

The Usk Post Office

UTC considers the Post Office an essential service and continues to work with MCC by offering support financially to ensure its opening. It is currently open Mondays and Thursdays 9-5pm and Saturdays 9-12.30pm.

Street Cleaning

MCC is not obliged to provide a road sweeper. UTC considers keeping Usk clean and tidy an essential service. As a result, UTC adopted this service and now totally funds our road sweeper, Robert.

UTC has provided new and additional litter bins in the town and have funded two extra "dog poo" bins on the grounds of the Athletic Club.

Safer Roads

UTC continues to press MCC for safer roads within Usk. This includes both the introduction of 20mph throughout Usk and the battle against illegal and dangerous parking. UTC is supportive of and grateful to the local community speed watch volunteers who campaign to improve road safety.

Closure of the Usk Waste & Household Recycling Centre

Following on from MCC Cabinet decision to close the recycling centre in 2020. UTC submitted a plan to keep the former recycling centre as an asset for the town to use as a site for local markets and events.

This proposal was accepted by MCC and with the aid of a grant from WG Transforming Welsh Towns, Usk now hosts outdoor artisan markets on the first Wednesday, last Saturday and second Sunday of the month.

Future of Usk Master Plan

The revised Usk Master Plan has been adopted by MCC to see the details please log on to www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/usk-town-improvement-project

Natural Resource Wales Discharge of Sewage into the River Usk

This has been of great concern to Usk Town Council and residents.

Angela Jones has worked tremendously hard raising awareness of this problem.

A "Save the River Usk" group has been formed to support Angela with her campaign.

The purpose of the group is

- To stop pollution in the River Usk.
- To give a non-political voice for Nature and the River Usk.
- To report issues to Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Welsh Government (WG), Monmouthshire County Council (MCC),

Digital Information Board

Usk was awarded a grant from Welsh Government and the digital information board is currently in the process of being installed. This will act as a town guide for visitors and residents alike, with information about places of interest, local businesses, accommodation, events, services and local news. The board will be installed in the area near to the Co-op Store and will provide up to date and current information. Thanks must go the Cllr Steve Williams who has played a huge role in this project.

SMART TOWN

Usk lends itself to being the ideal candidate for becoming a fully functioning SMART town. The benefits to the town itself are immense and as a pilot town we could lay down the foundation for other towns and rural communities to follow suite in this ever-changing world of digitisation and urbanisation.

The plans to set up Usk as a SMART Town are underway.

Memorial Hall Car park

The long-awaited resurfacing of the car park is currently underway. Once completed this will be a huge asset not only to the community halls located in the car park but residents and visitors.

Events and Tourism

As restrictions in Wales have eased UTC has started to once again host fundraising events.

UTC's main event this year will be the celebration of **HM Queens' Platinum Jubilee** with a Community Picnic for everyone planned on the Owain Glyndwr Field on the 3rd June.

Community Lottery Funding will help make this a special occasion.

Sadly, the Reindeer Parade will no longer take place in Usk. Cairngorm Reindeer have taken the decision to scale back and focus their events more locally. UTC was very disappointed about this but will look at new festive ideas.

The council's website www.usktown.org continues to provide useful information about the council and the community. In addition, the council has its own Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/usk.town/>

There is also a Town Guide available at various points in Usk.

Usk said 'Diolch Yn Fawr/Thank You' to all our NHS & Keyworkers.

Usk Town joined other towns across the UK to show their thanks to our NHS & Keyworkers on the first annual NHS, Social Care and Frontline Workers Day, Monday 5th July 2021.

Usk Town Council showed their thanks and gratitude with a whole day of events around the town. In preparation for the day, bunting and NHS flags were put up throughout the town and will stay up throughout the summer. In the morning as part of the national programme events, there was the official raising of NHS Flag and a Toast to our Heroes.





A £1,000 prize was offered by the national event organisers to the group who had Afternoon Tea in the wackiest location. The Usk Mayor, Deputy Mayor and a few others thought their entry of Afternoon Tea in the River Usk stood a good chance of winning and they were right! They were awarded joint first prize raising £500 for the Usk Mayor's Appeal.



Clotted Cream in the Stream! Usk's entry to the £1,000 prize for the wackiest location for Afternoon Tea - in the River Usk! Photograph Isobel Brown.



Raising the NHS Flag for our Heroes!
Photographs by Isobel Brown.

The Usk Brass Band gave their first, live performance since the pandemic in the arches of the Victorian Sessions House and despite the rain drew a substantial crowd. The band played, amongst others, the NHS favourites 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow' and 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. At 8pm the crowd joined the rest of the Nation in 'Clapping our Heroes' while the bells of The Priory Church of St Mary's rang out in appreciation.



Community Awards

The recipients of this year's Usk Town Community Awards- went to the following

- ❖ Gloria Dolan for all her superb work with the Coronavirus Food Kitchen.
- ❖ Isobel Brown whose IT skills and support to UTC is invaluable
- ❖ Russell & Anna Walker from The Willows, whose help with Usk in Bloom and continued support around the town is much appreciated.



Usk Mayor's Appeal

Through a number of fundraising events the Mayor of Usk, Cllr

Glenn Roderick supported a number of local children's and youth groups who missed out on so much during the pandemic.

The following organizations received a cheque for £230 towards their organization.

Usk RFC Juniors
Usk Brass Band
Usk Junior Cricket
Encore Drama Group
St Mary's Church
Usk Scouts
Usk Guides
Usk School PTFA
Usk Junior Tennis

COUNCIL SPENDING

Usk Town Council's Spending and Finance Precept £145, 656. 00

UTC's spending is controlled by a budgeting and monitoring process under the supervision of the Responsible Finance Officer, Mrs Diane Richards.

UTC aims to provide services, manage facilities, and meet the town's priorities. It monitors expenditures whilst endeavouring to obtain value for money.

The work of UTC is funded mainly through the precept which is collected via Monmouthshire County Council.

Background

(Setting the budget)

The council is required to set its annual budget by the end of the year (Dec) so that it can be approved by Full Council at its January meeting. Our precept request must be submitted before the end of January, which allows time for the County to set its own budget in readiness for the new financial year (April). When setting our 2020/21 budget we were unaware of the Covid Pandemic and its effect on our activities. Therefore, our budget predictions for the year were somewhat wide of the mark.

Finance Report to the 2022 Annual General Meeting for the period April 2021 to March 2022

by Diane Richards Responsible Finance Officer

"Though still in lockdown and unsure what we would be able to achieve this year, the annual budget was set and approved by Full Council at the December meeting.

The precept request has remained the same as in the previous 2 years at £145, 656. 00

With restrictions still in place although budgeted for, the Reindeer Parade and Christmas Markets did not take place.

We were, however, towards the end of year able to set up the former household and waste recycling centre on a license agreement with MCC as a community space to include regular artisan markets.

This was funded by a successful Welsh Government Transforming Towns Grant.

In 2021/22 Financial Support is provided for the following.

Usk in Bloom	8,000
Road Sweeping	27,595
Christmas Lights	8,800
Grass Cutting	4,000
Dog Waste Removal	1,400
Digital Notice Board	1,000
Allotment maintenance	1,000
Grant Funding	2,300
Usk Environmental Group	1,000

At the end of the year, due to the change in the market, we found ourselves out of contract for gas supply at the Sessions House and as a result spent well in excess of the budgeted figure.

Full Council agreed to increase the Building Maintenance budget figure to allow for essential repairs to the building.

Financial Position on March 31st, 2022

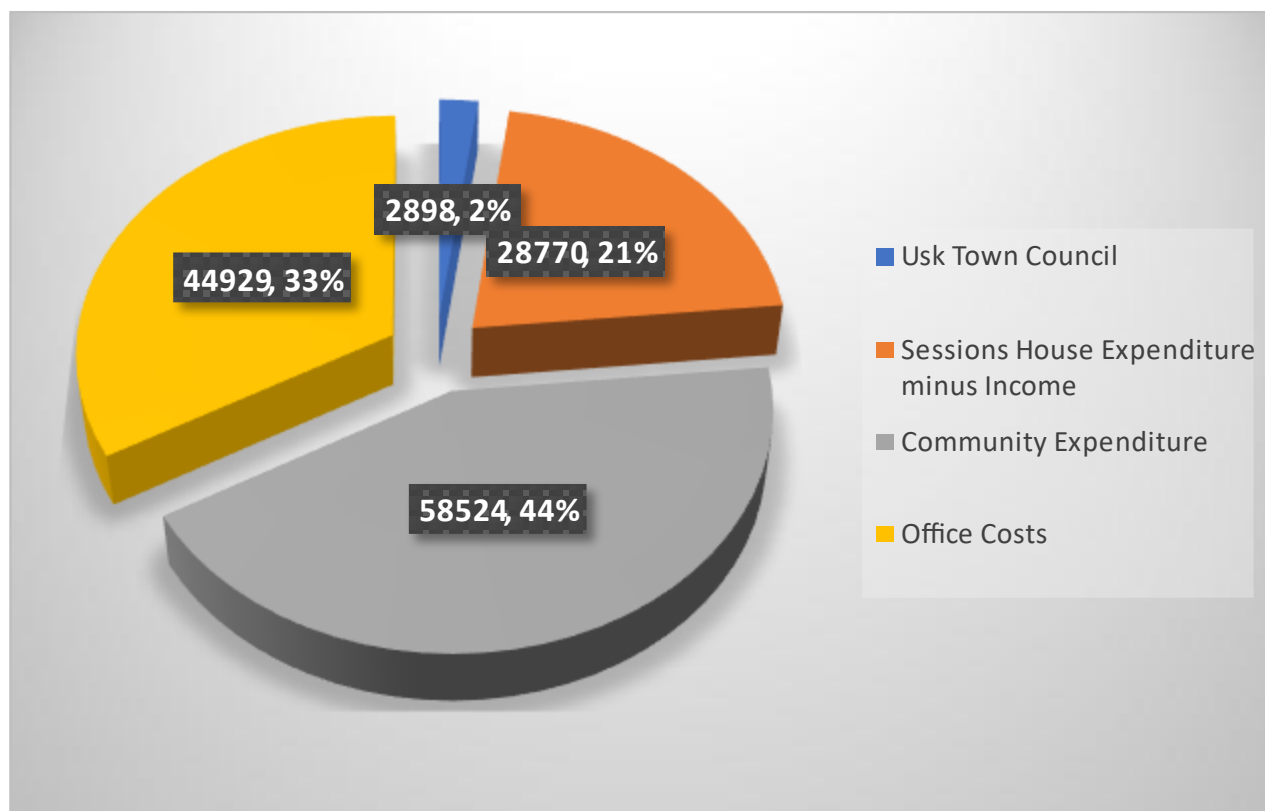
General Fund Opening balance	172,801
Income for the year	176,840
Expenditure for the year	182,399
Closing balance	167,242

Ear marked Reserves

Car park resurfacing	50,000
Road Sweeping	28,000
Arup (Future Usk Plan)	15,000
Total EMR	93,000

General reserves	74,242
VAT	10,374
Total	84,616

The accompanying pie chart shows a simple breakdown of expenditure.



Councils are advised to retain a reserve equivalent to 6 months running costs, and we meet these guidelines.

In conclusion

As the majority of the Finance Subcommittee are retiring this year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their invaluable help and support over the past 3 years and indeed many years previously without which Usk Town Council would not find itself in its present healthy financial state.

My thanks also to The Town Clerk Tracey Huxley who guides this ship with honesty, integrity, and a tremendous amount of hard work."

Councillor Allowances

Councillor Name	Payment as a contribution to costs and expenses (max £150 per member)	Responsibility Payment (up to £500 to a maximum of 5 members)	Chair/Mayor's & Deputy Chair / Mayors Allowance	Financial Loss Allowance	Travel & Subsistence expenses	Care Allowance (up to a maximum of £403 per member per month)	Other
Cllr G Roderick	Nil	Nil	900.00	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr S Williams	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr A Leathwood	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr R Galletley	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr C Wilkinson	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr M Evans	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr T Watkins	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr B Strong	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr M Howells	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr H Graz	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr A Ivin	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr P McGowan	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cllr A Morgan	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>	<u>900.00</u>	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>

Donations

Several charities have seen a huge decrease in their income. UTC supported the following:

- Coronavirus Food Kitchen
- Usk in Bloom
- Usk Town Band
- Gwent Young Farmers
- SARS

- Mon Citizens Advice
- Noah's Ark Children's Appeal
- Cairngorm Reindeer
- Prizegiving
- Selection boxes for Primary School Children
- Ty- Hafan
- Kid's Cancer
- Usk environmental Group

Usk Town Council's ongoing work & partnership with other local organisations

Usk and Graben Neudorf Twinning Association

A report provided by Mrs Jan Richards, Chair of Usk Twinning Association

"Last year's report described the delays and postponements caused by the Coronavirus pandemic and its subsequent lockdowns and limitations, which were particularly disappointing given that we should have been commemorating the 40th anniversary of our Twinning Association.

We had a two-handed exchange in the planning for 2020/2021 with exciting itineraries at an advanced stage in both locations.

Regrettably, hopes of pursuing these plans in this reporting year were again thwarted by continuing Covid 19 concerns and our ability to meet and discuss alternatives could not take place. This eventuality was also reflected in Graben Neudorf.

The year's activities were therefore limited to minimal communications between the Association's secretaries and to the sharing of Christmas greetings in both directions. Several long-standing relationships which have been developed over a number of years have been maintained during this time between individuals and families in Usk and Graben Neudorf in the personal arena also.

It is anticipated that in the coming reporting year, 2022/2023 the Association's plans can be revisited and revised. Meetings of Officers and of Members will be arranged in coming weeks to this end. Items for discussion will initially focus on membership and recruitment and on our fund raising and Grant Funding strategies. Account will be taken of the updated position and wishes going forward of members in Usk and in Graben Neudorf.

Recommendations and decisions considered will be made known to – and discussed with – Usk Town Council – as appropriate."

Usk in Bloom 2022

A report provided by Mr David Williams, Chair of Usk in Bloom

"As I write this report, it's with great pride and reflection for what the volunteers and committee have accomplished this Year. All the planning and operations to achieve the 'Usk standard' takes a huge commitment and dedication from many groups and organisations.

I'm pleased to report Usk in Bloom is once again celebrating winning gold in the 'Large Village' category of Wales in Bloom 2021. Twyn Square was a picture, much praised by visitors and residents, as were the new tubs of perennials and planters adding to the bedding display, and we extended the wildflower areas in St Mary church and opposite the school.

This year, Usk in Bloom produced a Tree Trail leaflet which has information that will enhance visitor and residents' experience while walking through our lovely town.

It may not look or feel like 'gardening' weather yet, but Usk in Bloom volunteers are in action all year round, The Towns permeant beds at Conigar, Lady hill, School and Park Projects have had their Winter and Autumn maintenance schedules completed.

*The 2022 plans are already being made for the Summer flower displays. This year's colour scheme produced a majority in favour of the Queen's racing colours in this her Jubilee year: purple and gold (ranging from deep orange to pale yellow.) Look out for a majestic display in Twyn Square, where UiB's peat-free policy will be continuing as part of their work towards environmental **consideration**. Elsewhere around Usk, we will be planting 'pollinator friendly' plants to support insects like butterflies and bees.*

Lastly, Usk in Bloom has planted of a new daffodil area in the ground outside the school, which includes planting 5000 new Welsh Tenby bulbs. This will give a wonderful welcome to visitors to the 'Town of Flowers' and offers residents young and old a blast of colour this is with the support of the Co-op and Morris's Garden Centre."

Usk Civic Society

Usk Civic Society (UCS) aims to promote high standards of planning, architecture, and design, and to inform people about the history, geography and conservation of the natural and built environment in Usk and surrounding areas. UCS takes an active and positive interest in planning policies and proposed developments. Like many other local societies, UCS has risen to the challenges of the pandemic and regular online committee meetings have continued. Matters discussed over the past year include:

A report provided by Mr Tony Kear, Chair of Usk Civic Society

"I am sure that the past year will be marked in the Society's annals by the huge milestone reached on Saturday 6th November 2021 when the bust of Alfred Russel Wallace was finally unveiled by ARW's self-confessed greatest enthusiast Bill Bailey in front of a large crowd which was beautifully and regally serenaded by the wonderful Usk Town Band. The response to this event has been quite amazing and many of us have bumped into visitors who have specifically visited Usk on the back of the ARW publicity. Bill tweeting the unveiling to his 3.4m followers might have helped. In years to come we may not recall the date of the unveiling but I'm sure we will remember the trailer loads of sheep that brought official proceedings to a temporary halt! As ever we can't rest on our laurels: there is now Phase Two of the fundraising to set in motion so that we can install an interpretation plinth alongside ARW's bust.

Our struggles to achieve such a stunning outcome and publicity way beyond expectations are detailed elsewhere in this report. I sincerely thank everyone involved notably Felicity Crawley, who sculpted the bust, and Peter Hall, a recent addition to the Committee whose enthusiasm and experience brought the required momentum to see Phase One completed. It was indeed a pleasure to see the goal set out in my first year as Chairman finally achieved in my second term – albeit 5 years later than planned! It was a magnificent team effort to get over the line.

River pollution in Usk was brought to the very public attention by Wild Swimmer Angela Jones. As a Society we rightly supported her campaign.

There is much to look forward to despite the disconcerting times ahead. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee will be rightly and royally celebrated on the Owain Glyndawr Field We are also taking an active part in the "Future of Usk Plan" discussions which will start in earnest after the five yearly local elections. I sincerely hope the new county council administration will truly give Usk the priority it deserves after years of investment elsewhere in Monmouthshire.

As I look to close, I would like to pay tribute to all the incredibly hardworking officers and committee members during yet another challenging year. Many are longstanding; their experience is invaluable and of great value to our newer members. Particular thanks are due to my predecessors as Chairman, Shân Henshall and Martyn Evans, who stood down from the Committee in 2021. I pay tribute also to the excellent contribution of our Mayor Cllr Glenn Roderick who has provided steadfast support for the Society and a visible link to Usk Town Council in his capacity as ex officio committee member.

And it is John Barrow that I return to in finishing my report. John sadly passed away in April 2021 and as a society we should remember his contribution to the society and Usk.

Despite this year's unusual challenges, it has been a privilege to serve as chairman again and I look forward to seeing the Society grow further in 2022/23. My grateful thanks to our many members for their unwavering support in a difficult period: we hope to repay this support more tangibly in the coming months."

Usk Action Litter Group

Thanks to Tim and Jane Southern, and volunteers who independently litter pick around the town on the first Saturday morning of the month. Their contribution to keeping Usk tidy is invaluable.

Usk Open Gardens

Usk Open Gardens weekend takes place on the last weekend of June every year. This is a very popular and unique opportunity to visit local, private gardens in Usk which are open to visitors. The gardens are in walking distance of the free car parks and there is a regular mini-bus service around the town. All proceeds go to raise money for local charities.

2021 hosted a much smaller Open Gardens but this was very well received and once again raised money for various charities. Thanks go to all involved.

Dog Fouling Action Group

Since 2015 MCC has had a Working Group comprised of a number of members of Town and Community Councils (T&CC's) including officers from the Waste and Resources/Environmental Health sections.

The primary focus of the Group is to raise awareness of the anti-social nature of dog fouling and help develop a social conscience that dog owners should 'pick up' under the brand **Give Dog Fouling the Red Card**.

There are currently twenty-two participating T&CCs of which UTC is one. There are typically two or three meetings of the Group every year which have proved an excellent opportunity for those attending to share ideas on how best to bring about change and reduce the number of fouling incidents.

It has helped target 'hot spot' areas, fund signage with consistent messaging highlighting the need for dog owners to 'pick up' and collaborative working on a couple of Action Days each year.

In April, members of Usk Town Council and MCC Environmental Officers took part in an Action Day in Usk to help raise awareness amongst dog owners.

MCC officers and members of UTC talked to dog owners, all of which apart from one, were carrying bags so that they could pick up their dogs' poo.

UTC has adopted the Pooper Snooper App to help tackle dog fouling in the town. The App maps all the dog poo and litter bins in the town, so it is easy to find out the location of each bin for people with a new dog or who are visitors to the area. It also provides a method of reporting dog fouling incidents, which can help identify hot spot areas where patrolling could be increased, or a bin provided. The more people that use the App, the greater its usefulness in tackling the problem. The message that came across is that there is only a small minority of dog owners who do not pick up, although every dog owner is blamed. The vast majority of dog owners care for their community.

UTC will continue to reinforce the message and remind residents of its importance.

Queens Platinum Jubilee

The plans for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee are scheduled for Friday 3rd June are well under way. We are looking forward to a celebration that will commence with the lighting of a Beacon from 8.30p.m on Thursday June 2nd on the Owain Glyndwr field accompanied with bugle call, and bag pipers playing music especially composed for the event.

On Friday June 3rd from 12 noon until 7p.m. there will be a Jubilee Party again on the Owain Glyndwr field with entertainment and activities for all ages through the day

Leading up to the Jubilee events UTC will at host Sessions House, an exhibition of Memorabilia from the Coronation and the seven decades of the Queens reign

Usk Town Council

In May there will be elections for both County Councils and Community & Town Councils throughout Wales. There are to be many changes to the composition of wards decided by the Welsh Boundary Commission. The changes for the Usk Ward include the increase in the number of County Councillors from one to two while the number of Town Councillors will be reduced from 12 to 7. Usk Town Council challenged these changes, but unsuccessfully. It was felt that at a time when Town & Community Councils are being asked to take on more responsibilities the move seems senseless, particularly as Town Councillors are volunteers so their work comes at no expense to the taxpayer.

Usk have said good- bye to Cllrs Peter McGowan, Steve Williams and Heather Graz who all worked tirelessly to improve our community.

The following long, serving members, Alec Leathwood, Roger Galletley, Martyn Evans, Tony Watkins, Brian Strong, Christine Wilkinson who between them have served Usk for 153 years are also standing down. Their contribution to Usk over the years has been invaluable, they will be missed.



Usk Town Council Staff

Town Clerk Mrs Tracey Huxley

Responsible Finance Officer/ Sessions House manager Mrs Diane Richards

Sessions House Caretaker Ms Lyn Barrett

Town Constables Mr Robert Hamar & Mr Shaun Galletley

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