

Penrith Action for Community Transition (PACT) AGM 2016

Summary Report for the year 2015-2016

PACT was formed in 2008 as part of the Transition Network, and is a community organisation leading a local response to the challenges of peak oil and climate change in Cumbria's Eden Valley.

PACT has remained very active over the past 12 months, with involvement in a range of projects on diverse themes.

The Big Lottery-funded Sustain Eden project came to a successful conclusion earlier this year. PACT collaborated closely with Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) over the 3-year term of the project. PACT's projects within Sustain Eden included the 'Grow Your Own' campaign in collaboration with Freegle, and 'Tree Whisperers' working with many schools across Eden to deliver a creative and stimulating education programme through visits to the county archives and woodland sessions led by experienced practitioners, plus development of teaching resources for future use.

Over the course of the past year PACT has again staged stalls and displays at a series of local events, including Apple Day, Seedy Saturday in Penrith, Penrith May Day, Carleton Fun Day, and at Penrith on a Plate and Penrith Show as part of the Eden Food & Farming Festival. Members have given generously of their time to arrange and staff these stalls, which have concentrated on a variety of themes such as reducing use of plastic, growing your own produce, and reuse / upcycling.

Once again January's Stone Soup Day was a great success as a winter warmer and social get-together, supported by a number of PACT members. PACT has also supported Freegle running a series of Give & Take events across Eden, with more in the offing. It never ceases to amaze the quantity and variety of items that enter and leave, some 'taken' before they've made it in the door, and always with a few items that nobody can identify....

Further PACT stalls are planned over the coming year, firstly at October's Apple Day at Acorn Bank. Other forthcoming events include the PACT ceilidh and a talk to Melmberby WI on the theme of transition.

Community gardening continues apace, including at Stricklandgate and the Salvation Army, as well as involvement with various local polytunnels. Pop-up planters across Penrith also continue to surprise and delight, everything from planted shopping and luggage trolleys to pallets and even baked bin tins! Quirky planters have become a real feature of the town, and have contributed to various awards being received for the initiative, energy and enthusiasm shown by Joan Robinson and her band of volunteers in greening our local environment. We remain very grateful to all those partner organisations and individuals who've helped to provide land, resources and funding to make this happen.

The PACT website continues to be a hub for our various events and activities, and remains a tremendous source of information added by Chris Cant.

As a constituted and experienced organisation PACT has continued providing various support to other local groups, and amongst others has very strong links to like-minded organisations such as Freegle, CAfS, and the Eden Credit Union. PACT continues to have a good reputation with and strong connections to Eden District Council. Further afield Paul Allen at CAT also remains a great friend and supporter of PACT, enthusiastically sharing with us the bigger picture of international climate change talks and the Zero Carbon Britain project.

During the year it has been heartening to see new faces joining PACT as members and directors, and we greatly appreciate the new ideas brought to PACT by Rosemary, Bill, Malcolm, Graham, Oliver and others. PACT is also very grateful to John Johnson offering to step into the vital role of Treasurer, and would like to pay tribute to the enormous contribution Chris Cant has made to PACT in that role over the past 5 years.

Board members should also be credited with contributing in so many ways to other environmental initiatives beyond PACT, either as individuals or within their local communities. Their attitude and actions continue to set a great example to others, showing what's possible with the right mindset and commitment.

Since formation we have continued to hone our approach to transition as we gain experience, seeking to broaden our general community engagement across Eden. PACT aims to convey as positive a message as possible, outlining an optimistic vision containing real world practical solutions to the challenges ahead.

While those in PACT need no reminder of how vital the transition message remains, the storms and floods which devastated parts of Cumbria over the past winter certainly show the immense scale of challenges ahead. The scientific consensus is overwhelmingly that accelerating climate change will cause 'freak' weather events to become more extreme and more frequent, hence the absolute need to continue efforts to reduce our communities' environmental impacts and strengthen our resilience in the face of adversity.

Nigel Jenkins
(Chairman)

7th Sept 2016