



Penrith Action for Community Transition (PACT) progress review June 2013

Background Summary:

PACT was formed as a 'Transition Town' initiative in 2008, with the specific aims of promoting and coordinating a local response to the twin challenges of peak oil and climate change in Penrith / Eden district. The ultimate aim is to greatly increase our local resilience to cope with the consequences of these challenges.

Since formation we have seen other major challenges surface, particularly global economic turmoil.

PACT's progress so far has been led by an informal '**Steering Group**' and associated **Action Groups**, of which the **Food Group** and the **Buildings & Energy Group** have been particularly active.

Current status of PACT:

- ✓ now constituted as an IPS (Industrial Provident Society)
- ✓ steered through monthly Board Meetings
- ✓ clear PACT 'brand' established
- ✓ very comprehensive website, including various films showcasing PACT activities
- ✓ bank account set up
- ✓ able to successfully attract grant funding and show evidence of project delivery
- ✓ credibility with local bodies such as Eden District Council, Penrith Partnership etc.
- ✓ public liability insurance
- ✓ to date PACT continues with a transition status of 'mulling' (as opposed to becoming registered as a 'fully official' Transition initiative)

Current PACT projects:

PACT continues to pursue various projects relevant to the group's overall aims. This includes delivering the following current projects as part of the Lottery-funded '**Sustain Eden**' project:

- ✓ 'Tree Whisperer' project with local schools – effectively Story Giants 2 with the theme of woodland (led by Dawn Hurton)
- ✓ Energy Supply Company (ESCo) – 'Opt 4' established to promote collective switching and energy conservation measures (led by Peter Ward)
- ✓ 'Egg Map' – online listings of eggs and other similar local produce available for sale at the gate (led by Chris Cant)
- ✓ Freegle Food Share / Grow-your-Own project (led by Chris Cant)
- ✓ Possible transport-themed project (TBA)

Key issues / challenges for PACT:

While PACT has achieved many good things in a number of key areas, particular challenges still facing the group include:

- ✓ increasing the numbers of those actively involved with PACT projects
- ✓ broadening demographic of those involved (particularly more young people?!)
- ✓ (possibly) registering as an 'official' Transition initiative?
- ✓ establishing an Action group for Education - engaging with the next generation
- ✓ developing a local **Energy Descent Action Plan** (EDAP) – and implementing it...!
- ✓ balancing emphasis between *tackling causes of climate change* and *mitigating the effects*
- ✓ building capacity to make a real lasting difference!

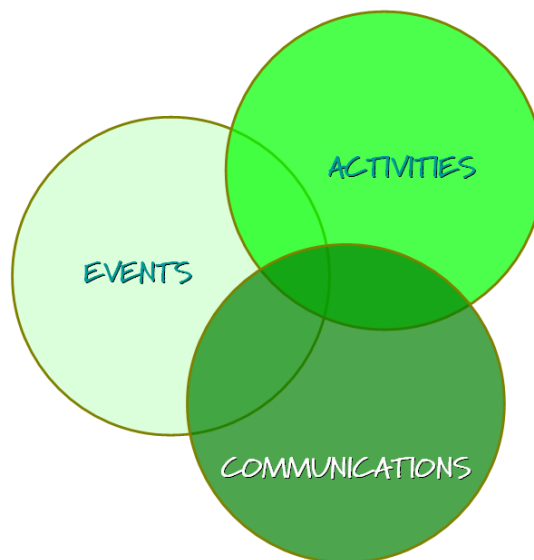
Since formation PACT has pursued a number of projects and campaigns, and hosted / participated in a wide range of local events.

The overall aims have variously been to:

- ✓ Motivate
- ✓ Learn
- ✓ Educate
- ✓ Inspire
- ✓ Share
- ✓ Enjoy



PACT projects have been delivered in various ways, particularly:



Clearly there is considerable overlap between these 3 main themes!

1. Events

PACT events have included:

Events initiated by PACT:

- ✓ 'Food for Thought' – celebrating local food through a locally-sourced meal & cookery demonstration
- ✓ Home Energy Fair - as part of CAfS Green Build Fortnight
- ✓ 'Bring & Share' food events
- ✓ Film Evenings – showings of environmental films such as 'Power of Community' and 'The Man who Planted Trees', plus short local films to showcase PACT's own projects
- ✓ Themed debates & discussions – including topics such as energy, transport & agriculture
- ✓ 'Stone Soup' day – free soup & storytelling
- ✓ Group outings – Todmorden, Alnwick Castle etc.
- ✓ Initial 'visioning' – developing ideas for projects & action groups
- ✓ Freegle 'Give & Take' events – promoting recycling and reuse
- ✓ Litter picks in and around Penrith
- ✓ Hosting visiting speakers – e.g. Paul Allen from CAT, Ben Brangwyn from Transition Network
- ✓ Talks by PACT members – e.g. to other local community groups

Other events with PACT presence / involvement:

- ✓ Penrith MayDay – stalls, Giants of Eden storytelling & parade
- ✓ Penrith Show
- ✓ 'Penrith on a Plate' - local food festival
- ✓ Apple Day at Acorn Bank
- ✓ CAfS Green Build Fortnight
- ✓ 'Seedy Sunday' - seed swap event
- ✓ Previous attendance at 2 annual 'Transition Conferences' – London, Totnes

Ideas for possible future events:

As well as continuing many of the above, ideas for further events could include:

- ✓ Climate change fair / debate
- ✓ 'Green drinks' – informal social events on environmental themes
- ✓ School visits / education fairs
- ✓ Community engagement events associated with development of EDAP
- ✓ Networking with other transition / environmental groups in Cumbria & NW
- ✓ 'Transition training' – providing sustainability advice to bodies such as the Council, Chamber of Trade, local businesses etc.
- ✓ Possible skill workshops? - PACT might consider hosting / facilitating workshops on green skills, e.g. topics such as:
 - ✓ Grow your own
 - ✓ Permaculture
 - ✓ Tree planting / pruning etc.
 - ✓ Cooking / baking (particularly bread making?)
 - ✓ DIY solar panels
 - ✓ Sewing / knitting etc.
 - ✓ Woodworking
 - ✓ Furniture restoration
 - ✓ Bicycle maintenance
 - ✓ Operating a woodburner efficiently
 - ✓ Foraging
 - ✓ etc.

These green skills could also be documented on film – e.g. short video 'how to' guides?
Aim to develop a clear local calendar of events – looking ahead for the next 6-12 months?



2. Activities

PACT has initiated / been involved with various activities including:

- ✓ Plastic bag-free campaign for Penrith & Eden - stalls / surveys / trader engagement, cloth bag give-aways etc.
- ✓ Cob oven building - including fostering links with Newton Rigg campus
- ✓ 'Edible Eden' - urban / community gardening
- ✓ 'Greening of Penrith' - including adding planters around the town centre, improved signage, footpath improvements etc.
- ✓ Local litter picks



It's clear that attempting to prevent / mitigate climate change does require **action**, and that for some people who express an interest in PACT actually **doing something** (particularly if it's fun / satisfying etc.) can be far more appealing than just passively attending a meeting or presentation etc.

Possible other ideas for projects & activities:

- ✓ Coordinating garden share schemes
- ✓ Establishing and promoting car clubs / transport schemes (electric bikes?)
- ✓ Establishing a local currency
- ✓ Establishing repair clubs
- ✓ Staging a film festival / competition
- ✓ Showing 'green films' at the Alhambra cinema
- ✓ Making DIY solar panels
- ✓ Having regular stands in the highstreet, or at events such as Farmers' Markets etc.
- ✓ Providing a building survey service – e.g. thermal imaging, air tightness etc.
- ✓ Documenting oral histories
- ✓ Fostering links with other organisations – e.g. Heart of Eden, gardening groups, education, SusTrans etc.

3. Communications:

A key part of the Transition Town model is **raising awareness** about climate change, peak oil and related environmental / sustainability challenges, in order to promote positive local responses to help increase our resilience.

PACT has used various media and communication channels including:

- ✓ Comprehensive website
- ✓ E-mail updates
- ✓ Local press – particularly CW Herald
- ✓ Films – various short films online
- ✓ Display boards, banners and literature at events
- ✓ Limited use of social media



Ideas for possible future communications:

As well as continuing with the above, further opportunities include:

- ✓ Cumbria Local – monthly magazine, community radio (Eden FM)?
- ✓ Increase use of Social media – Facebook, Twitter etc.
- ✓ Possible engagement with local / regional broadcasters – Radio Cumbria, Look North
- ✓ Visits to schools / local groups
- ✓ 'Campaigning' – to what extent should this form a part of the PACT agenda....?