

Summer 2009

PACT (Penrith Action for Community Transition) is a Transition Town* group formed during 2008, aimed at developing a coordinated local community response to the twin challenges of peak oil and climate change.

PACT is made up of an enthusiastic group of volunteers, committed to making a real difference in Penrith and the surrounding area.

(*for more information about the Transition movement, visit www.transitiontowns.org)



Now here's our 2009 summer *Action Update*:

RECENT EVENTS

March 17th - Film Evening We had a very enjoyable evening attended by 60 members and friends. The 2 main films shown were 'Message In The Waves', a documentary set in Hawaii which shows the horrific results of man-made pollution in a beautiful marine environment. The second film was 'The Man Who Planted Trees', a beautiful lyrical animation with a simple underlying message, the story of a man who benefits the entire community by planting tens of thousands of trees, alone, throughout his life.

Other short films were taken from the 'Do The Green Thing' website (check this out - it's a hoot!), and after the films there was plenty of informal chat over home-made cakes and coffee. A really good evening! *We plan to hold another couple of such film evenings over the autumn and winter, so do watch out for details.*

April 4th - Mass Litter-Pick PACT participated in the 'Churches Together' litter-pick in Penrith when over 50 volunteers from all of the local denominations collected litter from around the town, aided by PACT members who co-ordinated the event. In the space of just 2 hours, a staggering 54 sacks of litter were collected..... an impressive but sad statistic! Thanks were expressed to Eden District Council for the provision of litter-picking equipment, gloves and sacks.



May 4th - (May Day) PACT had a stall outside Penrith's George Hotel during the town's May Day celebrations, featuring a range of products made from recycled materials, including shoes, clothing, notebooks and pencil cases. Despite the bad weather, the display drew a lot of interest from passers-by, and we were able to give out lots of **PACT** information leaflets.

May 19th - PACT AGM We took stock of our first full year of activity, and after the election of Steering Group members and officers, and brief reports from some of the Action Groups, we were entertained by Nigel Jenkins' 'PACT – The Movie' and another of his excellent 'shorts' on recycling (David May in a starring role!).

After the usual delicious refreshments provided by members, the evening finished with a number of stories 'performed' by the Eden Storytellers, led by our own Peter Dicken, resplendent in top hat and tails (although it could be said that the hat has seen better days!).

May 22nd - 24th Transition Network 3rd Annual Conference (London) Our chair John Bodger joined 350 other 'Transitioners' from the UK and around the world over two and a half days of talks, workshops, discussions, 'open space' meetings, the world premiere of the film "In Transition" (watch for details of this being released) and, of course, eating (outstanding vegetarian food.....well, somebody needed to represent PACT!).

John described the event as "truly inspirational. It was wonderful to be with so many people who are all at different stages on the Transition journey", he said. "Finding out about different groups' and individuals' experiences and perspectives on Transition was a real education, and demonstrated how Transition can work for every type of community, whether small villages, market towns, urban areas, or cities. Delegates from such diverse communities as Boulder, Colorado (the first US Transition Town), a small town in Mexico, a village in Somerset.....all represented communities whose common aim is the reduction of their dependence upon oil in helping to combat man-made climate change", said John.

"However the outcome that was common to every single community that had embarked on the Transition path, and which was most pronounced, was the effect that the movement had had on strengthening community ties by rebuilding those 'bridges' that seemed to have been lost, leading to a resurgence in local identity and a sense of 'belonging'."

Another outcome from the conference was that no 2 communities had the same approach to creating and implementing their own 'Energy Descent Plans', and every group represented was at a different stage in this process (with many not having yet embarked upon it). John found that Penrith compared very well with many other Transition groups in terms of numbers and activities, even those that had been in existence for longer than PACT. However, there seemed to be no reason to delay the work in starting an Energy Descent Plan (which is a 'living' entity and can be adapted as time goes by), and this is one of the key 'lessons' that emerged from the conference.

June 2nd - Plastic Bag Campaign Launch Around thirty members of the public, including PACT supporters and local traders, attended this event at Eden Rural Foyer. The project to reduce the use of plastic bags in Penrith is a major initiative of PACT's Resources and Waste Action Group fronted by Deborah Garnett, and Chris Cant of 'Recycle'. Deborah gave a really informative presentation on the true cost of plastic bags to the environment, and there was a lot of discussion afterwards about the whole issue. *Around 8 billion plastic bags are issued annually in the UK alone.* That equates to 166 per adult, and each bag is used for an average of 12 minutes before being disposed of.

The evening was also used to launch the new organic cotton PACT carrier bag, with its distinctive logo, and the slogan '*PACT – But Not In Plastic!*' A full presentation will be made to the Penrith Chamber of Trade at one of their next meetings, in order to broaden support, and the early response to the campaign has been very positive (see also the note below on the shoppers' survey).



Contact PACT on-line at www.penrithACT.org.uk



July 11th - Plastic Bag Campaign, Penrith Shoppers' Survey PACT members had an extremely successful few hours on a sunny Saturday, soliciting the views of local shoppers and visitors on the use of plastic bags by means of a brief questionnaire, in return for which those participating were issued with the new PACT organic cotton shopping bag.

The event drew a huge response, with some 334 respondents giving a valuable insight into the public's understanding of the problems, and their overwhelming wish to see a massive reduction in the use and issuing of plastic bags.

For a full report on the campaign, the findings of the survey, and a brief video of PACT members in action, visit the PACT website www.penrithACT.org.uk and follow the link to the 'plastic-bag-free-Penrith' campaign site.

July 13th - QEGS Eco-School Launch PACT was invited to join in the celebration of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School's launch of its new 7.6kW photovoltaic installation, marking its formal status as an 'Eco-School'. PACT members manned a stall in the school grounds displaying recycled items, and handed out leaflets and pencils to a large number of eager pupils, as well as exhausting the supply of PACT cotton carrier bags!

We hope that this will mark the start of a close relationship between PACT and QEGS (as indeed we are seeking with Ullswater Community College and the primary Schools in Penrith), as part of our mission to involve pupils and teachers in the Transition initiative for our community.

July 21st - 'Food for Thought!' PACT's Food Action Group held an extremely successful evening hosted by local celebrity chef Ivan Day, when 70 members of the public were treated to a demonstration of how

to make a 17th Century 'grand salad', and Victorian ice-cream, using almost entirely locally-sourced ingredients.

Take a look at the PACT website for an entertaining review of this massively over-subscribed event, which it is therefore hoped to repeat sometime in the coming year.



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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The past few months have seen a steady increase in the work of PACT, both by its core 'Steering Group', and in the activities of the individual Action Groups. There is much more to follow in the coming year, including:

- Buildings & Energy Group's '**Low Carbon Energy Fair**' - 3rd October
- Food Group's '**Storytelling Celidh**' at Askham Village Hall - 23rd October
- PACT / Churches Together **Penrith Litter-Pick** - 24th October



Meanwhile activities will continue around the Resources & Waste Action Group's **plastic-bag-free** campaign.



For all these and other upcoming events, please watch out for details on the PACT website, in the local press or, if you are a member of PACT, by e-mail sent to your home.

If you are not already a member of PACT, why not join us, and become part of the Transition Town initiative – the fastest-growing, most relevant and vibrant community environmental movement in the whole world....all for just £3 a year! (although you are welcome to add a donation to this if you wish, to help with our essential costs, as we are almost entirely self-funded).



www.penrithACT.org.uk

The PACT website continues to develop, and will hopefully become central to communicating and promoting the group's activities – *please do take a look!*

Lastly, for a political observer's view of the relevance of the Transition Movement, go to www.transitionculture.org where you will find a transcript of Madeleine Bunting's article in The Guardian of 31st May 2009. It will remind you of just how vital, timely and relevant the Transition Movement is. *Be inspired!!*



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