

PACT Chairman's Report 2017.

When I took over as chair of PACT from Nigel last September, I knew that he would be a very hard act to follow, and this has certainly proven to be the case. The vitality of any organisation depends in some part at least upon the effectiveness of the person at the helm, and in this respect I know that I have not been able to contribute anything approaching the time and energy that I did when Nigel and I first started PACT some ten years ago.

Although I undertook the role of chair for a second time with the caveat that I might struggle to be effective (due in some part to ongoing domestic and family arrangements), I had not expected to be quite so inactive as has turned out to be the case over the past twelve months. I am very conscious of the efforts that have again been made across various initiatives by a small number of dedicated PACT directors, members and helpers. I will touch upon some of these actions in the following comments, and in summarising PACT's work over the past year, I ask you to forgive any omissions or errors. I have deliberately not made special mention of those people involved in particular events, partly for fear of failing to include everyone involved; however they, and most of you, know who they are, and I can only express to them my sincere appreciation and admiration, for giving so generously of their time and energies.

Once again, PACT has been represented with exhibitions and stalls at several local events, including Apple Day at Acorn Bank, Seedy Saturday in Penrith, "Penrith Goes Orange", "Penrith on a Plate", and at Penrith Show. PACT has also supported a number of Freegle Give and Take events, in Penrith, Shap and Kirkby Stephen.

One or two members have been very active with Community Gardening projects and initiatives throughout the district, including "Penrith in Bloom", and have visited a demonstration anaerobic digester in Keswick, arranged by SusKes. Recent initiatives have also included the setting up and running of "Repair Cafes" in Penrith, Kirkby Stephen and Alston, and these various activities are reported in detail on the PACT website. Other initiatives include seeking a reduction in wasteful traffic -lighting at the Kemplay and Junction 40 roundabouts, liaising with Friends of Eden Public Transport (seeking improvement to rural transport provision), representation on the Penrith Neighbourhood Plan committee, and representing PACT at a CAfS-sponsored Cumbria Sustainability Network event in Carlisle.

Back in November, on the eve of the US presidential elections, a talk given by Professor Mike Hambrey on glaciation and climate change, drew an audience of over 80 to the Friends Meeting House, and was very well received. PACT also hosted the showing of a film still in its pre-release stage: "The Atom - A Love Affair", the producers of which were seeking (and received!) a range of critical comments. Other films viewed included "Disruption" (hosted by CAfS), and several members travelled to Kendal to watch the screening of "A Plastic Ocean", which has had a particularly profound effect on those who saw it (of which more in a moment).

On the social side of things, a PACT ceilidh was held in Orton in October, albeit with somewhat disappointing attendance, and a similarly small but enjoyable bring and share evening was held in early January, much enhanced by the musicianship of Frankie and Jordy, as well as a couple of fiendishly difficult quizzes!

Whilst a recent showing in Penrith of the Al Gore film "Truth to Power" was a salutary reminder of the increasing challenges faced by the planet, it also appeared to illustrate a steady increase in environmental interest and action, particularly amongst the young. Although the past nine months have seen the appointment of a climate-change denier as US President, one of whose earliest acts was to commence the withdrawal of the US from the Paris Climate Agreement, his failure to win the hearts and minds of even his own Republican party would appear to demonstrate a groundswell of repulsion against many of his much TRUMP-eted proclamations. One cannot imagine that in years to come there will be many statues of this particular president, to be pulled down and recycled!

Having said that I wouldn't make special mention of individuals, I must make an exception by thanking Peter and Geoff for their hospitality in having hosted our monthly directors' meetings; for the hard work of John Johnson, our treasurer during this year; of Christine our hard-working Secretary, and of Chris for his active support across a range of areas – not least in maintaining the PACT website.

From my own perspective, I now see PACT as being very much at a cross-roads in terms of its purpose and effectiveness, and this has been brought home to me by Nigel's very understandable wish to step down as a director, in order to better concentrate his time and efforts on the many environmental issues surrounding our use of plastics and packaging. The role of PACT is something that we have discussed on many occasions, and we must find time at some point during this evening's meeting for a realistic assessment of how we can make the most effective use of our currently limited manpower and resources in order that PACT can be a credible organisation, if indeed this is still possible.

Thank you all once again for your many and varied efforts during this year, and over previous years.

John Bodger, August 2017