

## **Penrith Action for Community Transition (PACT) AGM 2015**

### **Summary of activities and progress for the year 2014-2015**

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.

We have continued to hone our approach to transition as we gain experience, aiming to broaden our general community engagement across Eden. We have also attempted to convey as positive a message as possible, outlining an optimistic vision containing real world practical solutions, even despite the immense scale of the challenges ahead.

During the past 12 months PACT has continued involvement with a range of projects on diverse themes, yet food remains at the core of many of PACT's activities.

PACT has been fortunate to be able to attract grant funding for various projects. We remain an important partner in the Sustain Eden project over the full 3 year term, working with Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) and generously funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

PACT's involvement includes the 'Grow Your Own' campaign in collaboration with Freegle. The project has been very ably led by Chris Cant, and has a number of strands including attending local events, on-going press releases and editorials, online sharing of resources, and the 'VEG' ('Visiting Edible Gardens') programme of visits to a variety of gardens open to the public over the summer. These have ranged from community garden spaces and private gardens in town centres, to those growing successfully in the more challenging climate of the Pennine fellsides.

Also part of the Sustain Eden project is Tree Whisperers, coordinated by Emma Aylett working with a range of schools across Eden to deliver a creative and stimulating education programme. This has included visits to the county archives and woodland sessions led by experienced practitioners, plus development of teaching resources for future use. The aim is that this will culminate in an exhibition in Penrith during late September and October, plus a programme of local tree planting.

As a constituted and experienced organisation PACT has continued providing various support to other local groups such as those developing community gardens in Penrith, Appleby Edibles which has now established a large community polytunnel at Appleby railway station already groaning with fresh produce, plus a new community polytunnel in Penrith.

In particular we're very appreciative of the initiative, energy and enthusiasm shown by Joan Robinson and her merry band of volunteers in greening our local environment. We're also very grateful to those partner organisations and individuals who've helped to provide land, resources and funding to make this happen.

Once again PACT has successfully run stalls and displays at well-known local events such as the ever-popular Apple Day at Acorn Bank, a spring plant fair at Lowther Castle, and at Penrith on a Plate as part of the Eden Food & Farming Festival. These stalls have continued to concentrate mostly on a food-related theme. Stone Soup day in January was another example of PACT members ably supporting a local event that has proved a great success as a winter warmer and social get together.

PACT remains well respected by Eden District Council as an active local group of do-ers, and has met with Cumbria County Council to discuss ways to reduce waste plus increase rates of domestic recycling and composting.

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

During the year PACT members have also continued their support for the on-going development of the EdenSave Credit Union, aiming to provide a more affordable lending service for those in need locally.

We should acknowledge the hard work put in by a committed few on the PACT board to achieve these successes. In particular massive thanks are due to Chris Cant for the enormous contribution he has made in so many roles, not least as treasurer and leader of the Grow Your Own campaign. We also recognise all the hard work and varied contributions made by those current board members now choosing to step down, and thank them for everything they have done for PACT over recent years.

Board members should also be credited with contributing in so many ways to other environmental initiatives beyond PACT, acting 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.

Despite all the hard work and achievements of the past year, it's increasingly clear that PACT momentum has slowed due to a number of factors. We are a very small team, the same faces continue to put in long hours time and again to make anything happen, and while we've been very pleased to welcome Peter Simpson as a new board member, plus added a couple of names to our membership, other attempts to draw in new energy have so far proved largely unsuccessful. It's also clear that original members are running out of energy and impetus to take the group forward.

Therefore although the challenges which PACT aims to address remain, arguably more so than ever, still inevitably we do now need to question our own resilience and sustainability, and fresh ideas and stimulus will certainly be required to allow PACT to continue in our current form.

Nigel Jenkins  
(Chairman)

16<sup>th</sup> Sept 2015