

PACT Social: the Sustain Eden Project

Upwards of forty people gathered in the St Andrews Centre Coffee Shop, Penrith, on Thursday 8 November for an evening of information sharing on the progress and plans of PACT – Penrith Action for Community Transition.

By way of introduction for newcomers, two short films by Nigel Jenkins were shown on the group's display at the marvellous Apple Day at Acorn Bank on 14 October and on the earlier spectacular Giants of Eden project that involved seventeen schools in and around Penrith.

Looking ahead, five presentations were made on the parts PACT is to play in the Sustain Eden project over the next three years, within a loose consortium of initiatives and partners led by Cumbria Action for Sustainability. The project has already secured funding close to a million pounds, mainly from the Big Lottery, and has the support of both Eden District Council and Cumbria County Council.

Peter Ward, current chair of the PACT Steering Group, first outlined plans to establish an Energy Supply Company as a social enterprise in Eden District, principally to mobilise communal purchasing power to reduce bills and so alleviate fuel poverty. He then briefed the gathering on PACT's intended transport development scheme based on car sharing arrangements to improve mobility (particularly in rural areas), reduce costs and generate income.

In a third presentation, Dawn Hurton gave an update on the so-far-unnamed successor educational project to Story Giants of Eden. PACT is promoting the activity in partnership with Cumbria Archive. The rapidly evolving ideas are centred on the past and present importance of woodland resources in Eden, for timber, recreation, wildlife, flood prevention and many other purposes.

Chris Cant, treasurer of PACT, then explained the expanding reach and scope of Freegle in Eden with the project to encourage people to grow-your-own, in particular with the sharing of surplus home-grown produce and planting materials (seeds and cuttings) within the community.

Continuing with the local food production theme, Joan Robinson reported on the success of communal food-growing initiatives in Penrith, illustrated with pictures of

familiar locations around town with unlikely food crops established by informal groups of neighbours.

Following the presentations, the company were fortified with refreshments and most remained for a further hour for a lively networking session. Contact details and further information on aspects of the Sustain Eden project are available on the key websites: www.penrithact.org.uk, www.penrithedenfreegle.org.uk and www.cafs.org.uk.

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Note for Editors:

Photos of the evening are available here:

<http://www.penrithact.org.uk/sustain-eden/pact-projects-open-evening/549>

For high resolution versions of the photos, please email Chris Cant on chris@phdcc.com

PACT (Penrith Action for Community Transition) is a Transition Town group formed in Penrith & Eden District during 2008, aimed at developing a coordinated local community response to the challenges of peak oil, climate change and economic sustainability. PACT is made up of an enthusiastic group of volunteers, committed to making a real difference in our district.

One of the core ideals of the Transition movement is to promote stronger communities. A vibrant local community working together can be more effective than individuals in reducing energy use, producing food and goods locally, passing on relevant skills and knowledge, and encouraging local businesses and local government to become more sustainable in the way they operate.

For more general information on PACT please visit the website or e-mail info@penrithACT.org.uk. Alternatively contact PACT chair Peter Ward on telephone (01768) 840153.

